August 2013

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

The Old Man and The Boy

The Enduring Legacy of Robert Ruark

By Philip Gerard

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9 Oyster Catcher

Marsh Front/ ICWW Views. Custom built 4 bedroom/4.5 bath home with high quality finishes and amenities. Bulkheaded lot. **$1,995,000**

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Ocean Front/Sound Front. A rare opportunity to own both Ocean and Sound Front property. Includes a 4 bedroom/6.5 bath ocean front home at 14 Beach Rd South, plus prime sound front lot with boat slip. **$4,475,000** (Ocean front home can be purchased separately for $2,475,000).

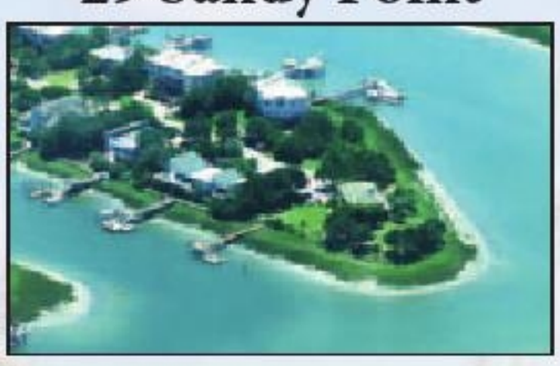
16 Beach Road South

Ocean Front/Sound Views. Wonderful 4 bedroom/4.5 bath home situated on prime lot. Spacious, open floor plan with multiple indoor and outdoor living spaces. **$2,595,000**

20 Pipers Neck

Sound Front. Wonderful views from this 4 bedroom/4.5 sound front home. Includes bulkhead, wading pool and dock with sandy beach. **$2,300,000**

29 Sandy Point



Sound Front/ ICWW Views. Rare sound front opportunity! Spectacular views from this sound front building lot located on the point. Private dock in place with deep water access. Home offers 4 bedrooms/4 baths. **$2,995,000**

34 Saltmeadow

Sound Front/ICWW Views. Grand 4 bedroom/5.5bath home with many updates. Includes bulkhead, private dock and pool. **$2,575,000**

119 Beach Road South

Sound Front/Ocean Views. Immaculately kept 3 bedroom/2 bath cottage situated on a large lot directly across the street from the ocean. **$1,699,000**

270 Beach Road North

Ocean Front. Spacious, well maintained 4 bedroom/5.5bath home located on prime ocean front lot. Features large living area, open kitchen, 2 dining areas and sunroom. **$2,900,000**

264 Beach Road North

Ocean Front. Beautifully appointed 4 bedroom/4.5 bath home in sought after beach location. Top quality construction Ipe decking, hurricane shutters, elevator and more. **$2,999,900**

246 Beach Road North

Ocean Front. Spacious 4 bedroom/4.5 bath home with open floor plan. Enjoy the ocean breeze from the open and covered decks. **$2,195,000**

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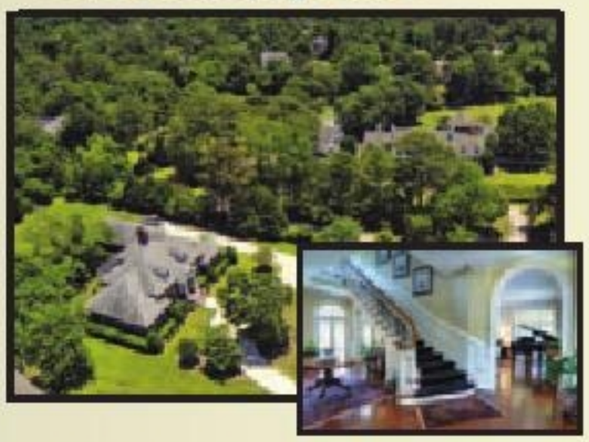
109 River Watch

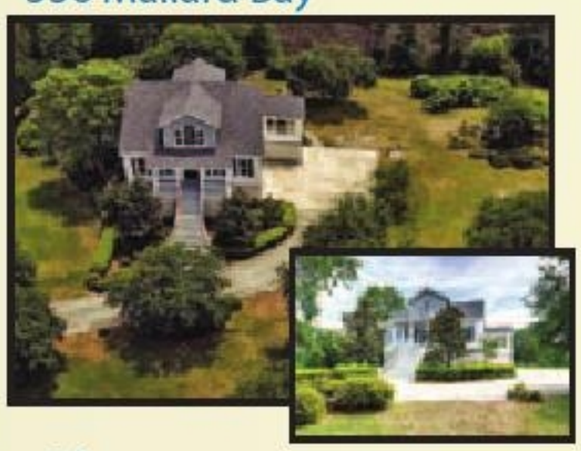
Southport. Located at the mouth of the Cape Fear River with mile long views across the Intracoastal Waterway to Bald Head Island, this class 5 bedroom low country cottage offers privacy and views from every room. $1,195,000

6013 Wellesley Drive



White Hall. Lights! Camera! Action! White Hall, the scene for several movies and television series features approxi mately 4 ½ acres of manicured grounds; this family compound offers complete privacy with a salt water pool, tennis court, 3 bedroom guest cottage and a private stocked pond. $2,200,000

536 Mallard Bay



Hampstead. Privacy abounds in this creek front residence with dock and private pool situated on 1.25 acres. This 5,000 square foot low country design has been recently updated – new roof, windows, carpet, appliances, hardware, paint and fixtures. $699,000

2017 Balmoral Place

Landfall. Located in the Highlands, this Mediterranean style residence offers over 8,000 square feet of elegance overlooking the scenic waters of the tidal estuary, Howe Creek with a separate in-law suite over a 4 car garage. $2,195,000

909 – 913 Twisted Oak Place

Landfall. Prepare to be pampered in the lap of luxury in this fine brick residence located on two lots at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac overlooking Landfall's Nicklaus Ocean Course #5 and Howe Creek. $1,250,000

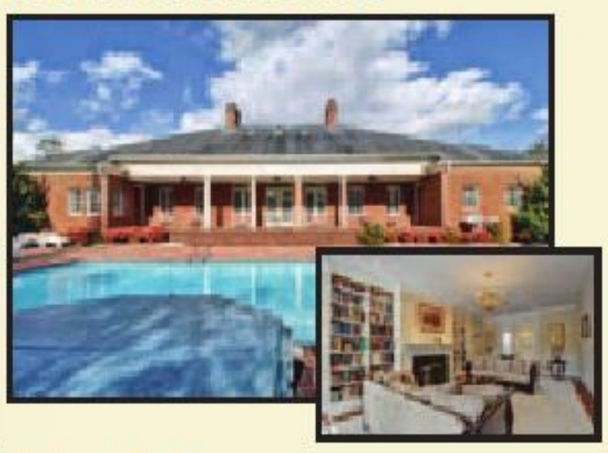
1924 London Lane

Landfall. Be prepared to be swept off your feet when you see the resort style 40' x 19' sunroom complete with commercial grade kitchen, blue stone slate and three soaring custom skylights on the Dye Golf Course (#17). $895,000

812 Gull Point Road

Landfall. Enjoy the fresh clean feel that only new construction offers! This all brick home features an open floor plan with expansive 12' ceilings on the 1st floor and 10' on the second level. $875,000

400 Marshland Drive



Landfall. Located in the estate section of Highland Ridge on over an acre of manicured grounds with walled pool and hot tub, this all brick residence boasts 4200 square feet on one floor. $847,000

2021 Deer Island Lane

Landfall. Enjoy all the updates this stately brick residence offers with 2 fireplaces, two master suites (one of each level), natural gas heat, a walk – up attic completely floored and great outdoor living. $829,000

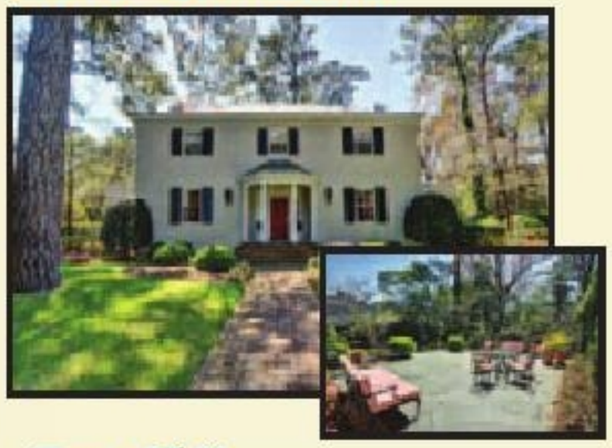
1204 Vanderhorst Way

Landfall. Located in Drayton Point with views of Landfall Lake, Horseshoe Lake and mile long trail, this coastal design features an open floor plan with 5 bedrooms including a first floor master. $829,000

1 Oyster Catcher

Figure Eight Island. "Twin Views" – Glorious sunrises and spectacular sunsets abound from this unique listing! Extensive wrap around decks provide the perfect place to enjoy ocean, sound and inlet views. $1,595,000

726 Forest Hills Drive



Forest Hill. One of Wilmington's prettiest streets is the setting for this fine painted brick home with slate roof and slate terrace and a meandering creek in your back yard. $695,000

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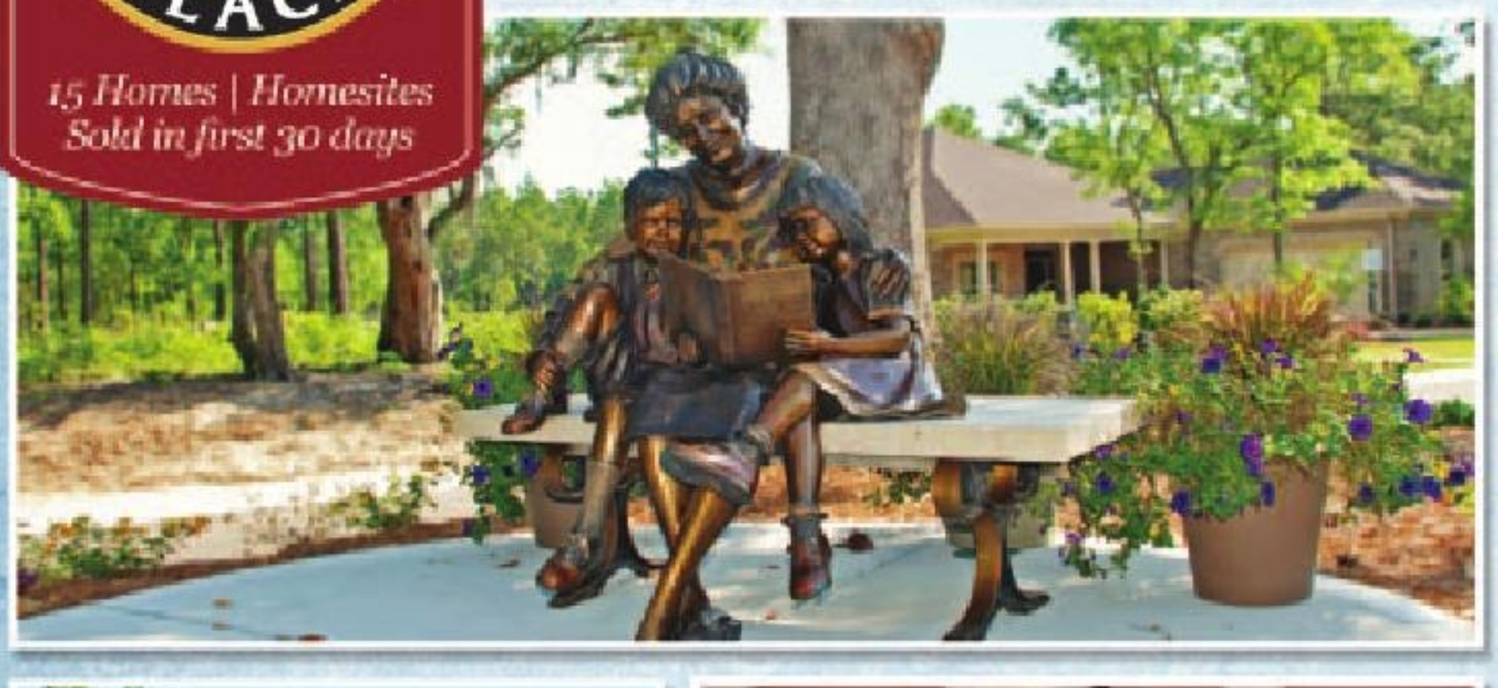

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Cover subjects are rarely as cooperative — or fitting — as Henry Hawthorne and his two grandsons, Duncan McPherson, 7, far left, and Sam Long, 10. Hawthorne, a grandfather of eight and retired pediatrician with 40 years of practice in Wilmington, delights in having his grandsons (from Calgary, Canada, and Baltimore, Maryland, respectively) for the summer months. "I'm the Old Man but they teach me as much as I teach them," he notes with a laugh, pointing out that Sam's father, Matt, is the grandson of a man, also named Sam, who was an early friend of Robert Ruark's.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH AND PHOTOGRAPHS THIS PAGE BY NED LEARY

Alexander Bellamy Koonce

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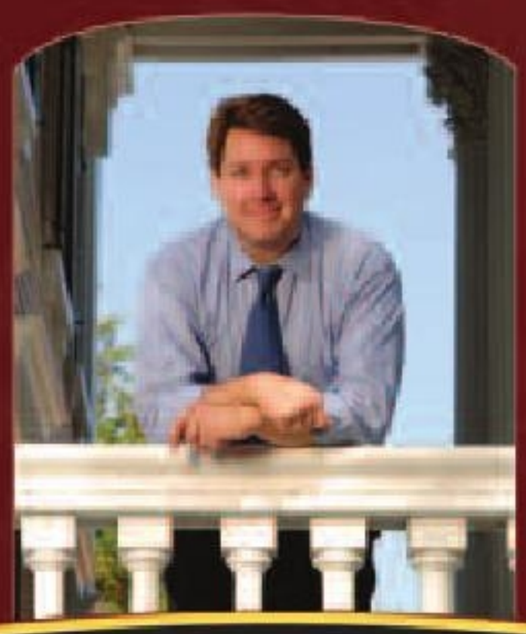

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If you long to live on the water you will love this Intracoastal waterfront property. This home is situated on a private, wooded bluff with a 180 degree unobstructed view of a 200 acre protected area. Expansive water views.

$1,399,000

2020 Lynnwood Dr
7BR/6.5BA 6378 sq ft

Glen Meade
Gracious Brick Home. Absolutely perfect is a brand new gourmet kitchen, which is in the process of being installed now. From formal dinner parties to casual cook-outs by the pool, it provides the perfect venue for any occasion.

$1,195,000

509 Moss Tree Dr
5BR/3.5BA 4155 sq ft

Landfall
This beautiful Colonial on nearly half an acre is ready for your family. Built in 2005, the interior lives like new with its open floor plan, hardwood floors, custom Bali shades, and gourmet Kitchen with Dacor gas range and two ovens.

$699,817

448 Sandman Dr
4BR/3BA 2824 sq ft

Kure Dunes
Beautiful custom built home in Kure Beach on a quiet cul-de-sac . Enjoy beach living at it's best only a block from the community access with parking and bath house to the beach. Amenities include Private beach access, Clubhouse and pool.

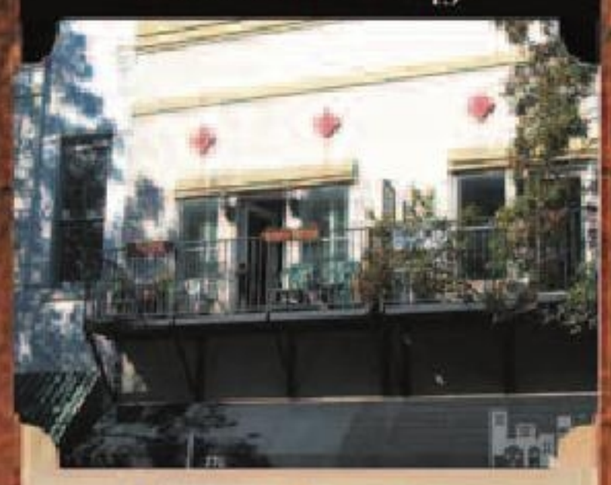
$549,900

4212 Appleton Way
4BR/2.5BA 2837 sq ft

Echo Farms
Beautiful Updated 2 Story home has direct access to Cape Fear River from a Tidal Basin. Formal Areas-Large Screen Porch-2 Car Garage-Granite Counters and 2 fireplaces. Golf, tennis, and pool available w/different packages.

$349,000

271-C N Front St #C
2BR/2BA 1170 sq ft



Historic Downtown
Desirable condo in the center of historic downtown. This beautifully renovated home has tall ceilings, hardwood floors, moldings, built in cabinets, gas log fireplace, stainless steel appliances. Balcony overlooking Front Street and river views.

$276,800

1024 Echo Dr NE
3BR/2BA 1833 sq ft

Parkwood Estates
Leland. Great home on a beautiful corner lot in a quiet neighborhood. Enjoy community living without HOA fees. Plenty of room for relaxing on the large deck overlooking a nicely landscaped fenced in back yard. A Bonus/flex room.

$258,000

114 Cromwell Cir
5BR/3BA 2092 sq ft

Lansdowne Estates
Incredible renovation of this beautiful Colonial, located in the Lansdowne subdivision (Hoggard School District) of Wilmington. Brand new roof, all new double hung windows, and 2 zone HVAC with a 10 year warranty. A large 12x13 back deck.

$254,900

Ceiling Fans and Feet Dancing

By Jim Dodson

Some years ago we moved into a historic house loaded with charm and only one thing missing — air conditioning. To be fair, the old place actually came with an antiquated central air-conditioning system, a jerry-rigged unit that provided a bit of excitement the first hot night I attempted to switch it on in search of cool air.

The unit caught fire and I needed the garden hose to douse the flames. A "climate-control technician" arrived the next day to replace a burned-up compressor motor and several parts in the outside unit, then climbed up into the cobwebbed attic to have a look at the indoor compressor whose job it was to convey chilled air through the second floor ceiling vents, in theory cooling the place from top to bottom. The house, you see, is such a solidly built dowager from the Gilded Age (complete with foot-thick masonry walls) that apparently putting vents downstairs proved nigh impossible.

"Wow," the tech said as we stood together in the dim, hot, cloistered air beneath the rafters, "this system is older than I am." He calculated it to be circa 1969, the year of Woodstock and the moonwalk, then glanced around the dusty attic and pointed to a disassembled attic fan leaning against a wall near the peak vent. "I'll bet that thing sucked the hot air out of this place back in the old days. Those guys knew what they were doing when they built this house. That was nature's air conditioning."

"I wouldn't mind having those old days back or at least that attic fan," I couldn't resist saying, explaining how I'd grown up in a house before the coming of central air that was equipped with a similar attic fan that drew in the air from the yard and adjacent woods all night long, cooling things down and soothing fevered dreams.

"Bet it was nice, huh?" he said. "I've never slept in anything but air conditioning."

"I still love to sleep beneath a fan," I admitted. "Air conditioning sometimes makes me feel like a side of beef in the freezer."

He laughed. "I'll bet you won't say that come August." He gave me a sweaty grin.

Following his thorough check-over, he cranked up the dear old system again, producing a few faint cool breaths of air from the upstairs ceiling vents. "I'm afraid 77 degrees is about the coolest it will ever get," he said a bit sheepishly, taking a final reading. "And it may be lucky to break 80 when August gets here."

I thanked him for his efforts, switched off the system, and promptly drove to Lowe's to purchase a couple of large pedestal fans.

If it's true what poets and child psychologists say — namely that our world views are shaped by the first ten years of life — then perhaps I'm simply a product of a slower, un-air-conditioned world.

The first fully air-conditioned buildings I can recall were the newspaper buildings where my father worked in the late 1950s. About the same time, a cute penguin who looked like Chilly Willy appeared in the front window of our local Piggly Wiggly store with the beguiling enticement: "Please come inside where it's coooooooool! Enjoy our lovely air conditioning. It's free!"

These days it's no longer the fashion to speak of having had maids or cooks of any race, I suppose, but our African American maid, Jesse May Richardson, was a rock of domestic life who I now think may have actually saved my family's life and certainly nurtured us through a difficult transition period after my mother suffered a late-term miscarriage days before we moved home to North Carolina. Among other enduring gifts, Miss Jesse May taught my mother how to cook in true Southern style and my skinny older brother and me how to "feet dance" to gospel music from her kitchen transistor radio.

The downside of this proposition was that Miss Jesse May had pretty much absolute and unimpeachable authority over my daily life and didn't hesitate to use it. While my mother rested though the warm afternoons, it was she who first led me along to the new air-conditioned Piggly Wiggly store for her weekly shopping visit, demanding first that I "wash them filthy bare feet good" and put on the new leather church sandals I hated more than just about anything, an affront to true summer adventuring, warning me in no uncertain terms not to "go wild like some little Indian inside that nice store."

I assured her I wouldn't, though the first thing I did when Jesse May turned out of sight was yank off those wretched sandals and slide my bare feet over the chilled tiled floor of the new air-conditioned grocery store like it was a skating rink, thrilled by the unnatural coldness of the floor. I wound up in the baking aisle, fashioning what my brother and I liked to call "King seats" out of large sacks of flour. I was perched there pondering life and soaking up the refrigerated coolness when, unfortunately, Miss Jesse May Richardson wheeled around the corner of the aisle with her cart. She saw me and stopped cold, giving me the wooly eyeball.

"Well, look at you," she declared, "sittin' there like a big-shot with your skinny hiney on somebody else's flour."

"I'm just enjoying the lovely air conditioning. It's free!" I pointed out to her.

"That so? Well, child, I suggest you get up straight-away from them flour sacks and put your shoes back on them feet or you'll find yourself sittin' out in the car sweatin' like a sinner on Judgment Day."

To this day, I can't step into an intensely air-conditioned grocery store on a broiling summer day without suddenly thinking of Miss Jesse May Richardson, the woman who saved my family's life and taught me to feet dance, though I still sometimes have the urge to make a "King seat" in the flour sacks.

Most Southerners of my generation experienced their first air conditioning at a movie house or public building around 1960, but according to the comprehensive Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, air conditioning first appeared in the South at a cotton mill in Belmont, North Carolina, in 1906. By 1920, the device was being used to cool fabric mills, tobacco-stemming rooms, and bakeries across the South.

Use in department stores, cafes, libraries and private homes, however, didn't broadly develop until after World War II, at which point "air conditioning became an immutable part of Southern life," according to the book on Southern culture. "In varying degrees," the authors note, "virtually all Southerners have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the technology of climate control. Air conditioning has influenced everything from architecture to sleeping habits and has contributed to the erosion of several traditions, most notably cultural isolation, agrarianism, romanticism, poverty, neighborliness, a strong sense of place, and a relatively slow pace of life."

Mississippi writer Eudora Welty was once asked by a Northern journalist why the South produced so many excellent writers. "Porches," she reportedly gave as a one-word answer. In an age before mechanical air conditioning, went her logic, porches were where Southerners gathered to cool off and spin tales after a long hot summer day.

My own view, shaped by a childhood cooled by a lazily turning fan blade of some sort, is that there's no finer sleep to be found than by an open window with a fan bringing the smell of the outdoors into your very bed — the mingling scents of new mown grass and August honeysuckle in bloom, or simply the cool musk of the nearby woodlands. Sleeping by an open window permits a body to feel connected to the natural world, rather than sealed inside a climate-controlled box. Some of my happiest summer nights were spent lying in my bed listening to approaching thunderstorms and feeling the wind of the approaching storm through a gently rippling screen.

Sadly for me, the year I went off to college in 1971 with a suitcase and portable fan in hand, my parents finally installed central air conditioning in their home. My old bedroom was never quite the same again, except those nights when I shut my bedroom door, closed the air-conditioning vents, and cranked open the windows to sample nature's air conditioning. It was about that time I noticed that fewer and fewer people, including my parents, sat on the porch to catch the evening breeze and talk.

"The unnecessary refrigeration of America has become a chronic disease," political pundit Joe Klein, obviously a kindred spirit, wrote in *Time* magazine a couple of summers back, noting how, as summers grow warmer, many Americans have simply grown accustomed to keeping their houses cooler in summer than in winter, using up more British Thermal Units annually than the total energy consumption of all but twenty-one countries. Quoting an energy expert who claims Americans could save 4 percent in energy costs for every degree warmer they set their central-air thermostats, Klein proposed that we all set our air-conditioning units at 75 degrees — "a comfortable, if slightly chilly number to my mind" — and thereby do the right thing to preserve energy and stay cool on the hottest summer day.

At our house, for what it's worth, we fared reasonably well through the dry heats of June and July relying on pedestal fans and the occasional evening thunderstorm to cool things off, though I concede there were a handful of stuffy nights, when even I woke up bathed in a sticky sweat, feeling as if we were sleeping over at an all-night bakery.

These occasions gave me a good reason to go sleep in the guest room with its fabulous ceiling fan and old-fashioned roll-out windows, a chance to be transported back to an un-air-conditioned South that doesn't really exist anymore. Does anyone still feet dance in the kitchen?

Unfortunately, with the dragon's breath of August on the doorstep, we hit a fierce fortnight where the nighttime temps never dropped below 90 and the howls of heatstroke intensified, resulting in the arrival of a crew that installed a smart new energy-efficient air-conditioning system that quickly had everyone in the house smiling but me feeling, at times, like a fellow trapped inside a beer cooler.

With the new state-of-the-art thermostat set at an environmentally sensible 75 degrees, my Yankee wife, the kids and the dogs are sleeping nicely through these fabled dog days of summer.

I, on the other hand, sometimes find myself goose-bumped from the unnatural coolness and get up in the middle of the night to wander out to our back terrace and sit in my favorite Adirondack chair, soaking in the sounds and smells of the summer night. The other night my wife followed me out there and wondered if everything was all right. There was a welcome rumble of a far-off thunderstorm, a flicker of blue in the pines. "Is something wrong?" she wondered. "Bad dreams?"

"Nope," I assured her, scratching a bare foot that hasn't been gloriously filthy, alas, in many decades. "I'm just waiting for a storm to cool things off a bit and enjoying nature's lovely air conditioning. It's free, you know."

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Homeboy

By the time you're finished reading this month's engaging cover story on Wilmington-born author Robert Ruark, you'll feel like you know the guy. The intimate portrait continues at Fort Johnston Southport Museum & Visitors' Center (203 East Bay Street, SouthPort), less than half a mile from the house where Ruark spent his boyhood summers. Relics from Ruark's past such as his Remington typewriter, his worn-out leather satchel, a custom-made stein with an antler handle from one of his many hunting expeditions, and the mounted cheetah head that Ruark gave to his publisher after a trip to Kenya are on display. You'll also see framed photos of the Old Man (Ruark's grandfather, Captain Edward Atkins) and Ruark as a boy. Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; Sunday from 1–4 p.m. Information: (910) 457-7927.

Swan Songs at Sundown

That's not Steve Perry – or the dude they found on YouTube to replace him. His name is Brian, and he's got the vocal chops you'd hope for from the lead singer of a Journey cover band. Departure – fitting they should be the last performers in the 2013 Downtown Sundown concert series lineup – will rock the Riverfront stage (5 North Water Street) on Friday, August 30 like itis 1981 all over again. And the four Fridays before that? More glorious throwbacks, including tributes to the Beastie Boys and Sublime, the Eagles, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers and Aerosmith. Music starts at 6 p.m. Beer, wine and food available for purchase. Admission: free. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown/schedule.

Your Life in 1,000 Words

Last month we announced the 2014 *Salt* Magazine Memoir Contest. Send a brief chapter of your life – 1,000 words or less – to ashley@saltmagazinenc.com by October 1, 2013, for a chance to see your original story in the pages of a future issue of *Salt*. Subject line: "Salt Memoir Contest." Include your name, telephone number and mailing address in the body of the email. One submission per entrant, please.

Aloha, Y'all

Masonboro Island? Awesome. Luau on Masonboro Island? You get the idea. Kayak over to Masonboro on August 3 for a Good Vibrations Luau, where you'll find hula dancers, craft brew and tropical beverages, and – yep, that's roasted pig you smell – a Hawaiian feast prepared by chef Matthew Gould of Canape ILM. Meet at Trails End Park (7432 Thais Trail, Wilmington), 2 p.m. Cost: $110–$125. Info: (407) 247-5516 or www.ncecoodysseys.com.

Summer Love

Two reasons to keep digging summer: a film about star-crossed lovers and a comedy where love and lust pulse beneath the layers of anger and misogyny. Guess which one of the two is based on one of Shakespeare's plays. August 5–7, Cinematique of Wilmington presents *Before Midnight* at Thalian Hall Main Stage. *Much Ado About Nothing* runs August 12–14, same place. Admission: $8. Showtime: 7:30 p.m. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.whqr.org; www.thalianhall.org.

Here's Your 'Cue

Lexington is over two hundred miles away, but from August 9–11, Wilmington is Barbecue City. The Port City Ribfest features BBQ from across the country and an all-star lineup of local and regional musicians to go with it. Come hungry. Admission: $7; $5/seniors. USS North Carolina Battleship Park, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. For information, rib facts and a complete schedule, visit www.portcityribfest.com.

A Taste for Blood

The tale is classic: Boy likes girl. Boy finds mysterious plant and names it after girl. Said plant feeds on human flesh. See Opera House Theatre Company's spin on *Little Shop of Horrors*, a rock musical based on the low-budget 1960 film about life – and love – in a Skid Row flower shop. The humor, of course, is dark and delicious. Opening night: Wednesday, August 28, at 8 p.m. Show runs through Sunday, September 8. Admission: $25. Main Stage, Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Turtle Power

Now through the end of August, meet for weekly "Turtle Talks" at Kure Beach Park (Mondays at 7 p.m.) and the Carolina Beach State Park Visitors building (Wednesdays at 7 p.m.) Learn when, where and why sea turtles nest on the shores of Kure and Carolina beaches and find out what you can do to help the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project in their efforts to keep hatchlings safe. Free. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.seaturtleproject.org.

Different shore, different day: The Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project (see photo essay on page 48) hosts "Turtle Talks" near the Johnny Mercer Pier on Tuesdays through August 27, 7 p.m. Bring the whole family along to learn about the nesting sea turtles at Wrightsville. Free. Info: turtles.wrightsville-beach.info.

SaltWorks

Can We Get an Amen?

Gospel violinist Eric L. Taylor will rock the house of God on Friday, August 16, from 6–8 p.m. Taylor is a self-taught musician who has opened for performers such as Kirk Franklin and Fred Hammond. The sound is otherworldly. Admission: $30 (includes dinner and program). Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, 2929 Princess Place Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 675-8174.

Picture This (and That)

On the second floor of the Bellamy Mansion, in one of the Bellamy children's bedrooms, there's a shirtless man with skin like old leather wearing orange mirrored-lens sunglasses and an expression that calls to mind *Fear and Loathing*. This and other surprising photographs from the Cape Fear Camera Club's *Images of Distinction* exhibit will be on display inside the grand antebellum structure at 503 Market Street now through August 23. Creative digital imagery includes mystical landscapes, striking portraits, and impossibly intimate shots of various sea birds. If you've never had a tour of the mansion, designed by the same architect who built the house featured on page 58 of this magazine, discover what life was like for the Bellamys and their nine children. Info: (910) 251-3700 or bellamymansion.org.

Think You Can Dance?

On Sunday, August 18, at 2 p.m., the Dance Cooperative presents works-in-progress at the Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall at CAM. This terpsichorean showcase is part of a monthly series that gives working artists a nurturing environment in which to present new works to be reviewed and critiqued. Open to working choreographers, dancers and the general public. Donations appreciated. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999; www.cameronartmuseum.com; thedancecooperative.org.

Careful You Don't Spill

On Saturday, August 30, at 7 p.m., the Lower Cape Fear Hospice Foundation is hosting a "Last Chance for White Pants" gala and fundraiser at the poolside patio and grand ballroom of the Hilton Wilmington Riverside. Includes heavy hors d'oeuvres, beer and wine, silent and live auctions, and music by Mo' Sol, Atlanta's favorite Motown/funk/soul/hip-hop band. You can use Labor Day to recover from all the fun. Tickets: $100. Info: (910) 796-7962. Tickets: www.hospicewhitepants.org.

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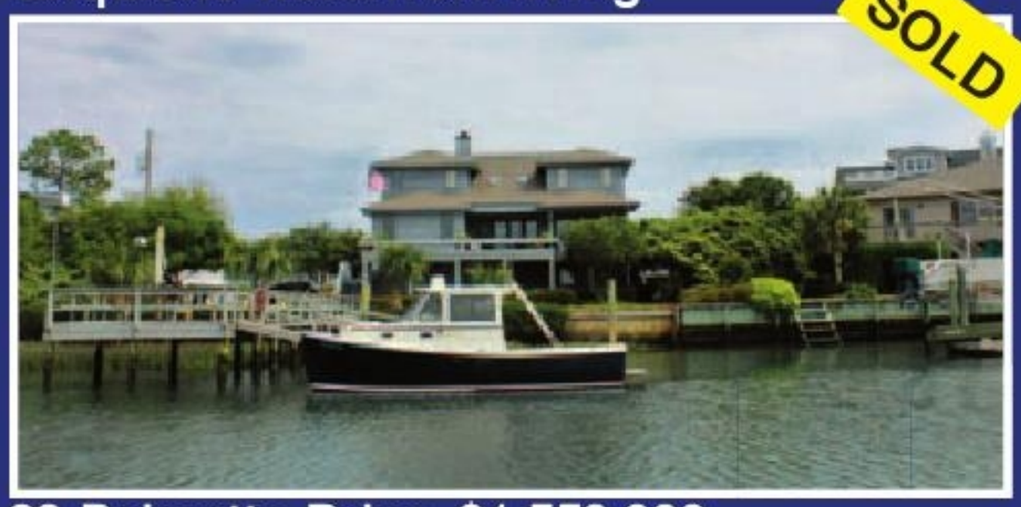

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Love Among the Umbrellas

Erin Kirrane of Castle Hayne Farms

By Ashley Wahl

All week long the farmers pray, dance, bargain for rain. For the crops, yes, and the dry, cracked Earth. But also for reprieve.

The gods respond on Saturday.

**

Water Street is puddle-wonderful. The sky is a sopping blanket of ash-gray clouds, but the Riverfront Farmers' Market is a garden of colors. Yellow plastic ponchos — like a host of golden daffodils — flutter and dance in the gusting wind. Between lusty bursts, shoppers start resembling crookneck squash, squash blossoms, rubber duckies on the water.

Gene Kelly's black umbrella was a snore. Here, purple polka-dots and paisley patterns laugh at clouds. A pair of lovebirds wears umbrella hats. Their fledgling sloshes alongside them in shiny, technicolor rain boots.

Black River Organic Farm's red kale and cabbage, orange-and-green striped tomatoes, yellow sunflowers, leafy greens, purple eggplants and potatoes are nearly as vibrant as its customers.

"We've been busy despite the weather," says one of the vendors, a bright-eyed veggie lover with a breezy disposition. She and three green-thumbed hippie cohorts — viva la vie Bohème — keep dry beneath the sagging canopy with warm smiles and friendly answers to farm and flavor inquiries.

"Which tomato tastes best?"

"The slicers," says the guy with black-framed glasses. "Although they're not as pretty."

He picks up a picture-perfect plump red one the size of a baseball.

"Well, they're pretty. But they're too perfect."

He eyes the heirlooms: German Johnsons, pink ladies, green zebras and Cherokee purples — in all sorts of wonky shapes.

"These are much more fun."

Also fun: straight-from-the-garden cukes the size of juggling pins.

The fennel sits pretty, waiting to be noticed. Curly kale sells for $2.50/bunch.

Rain pitter-patters on the canopy above. Nature's Saturday love song.

**

At 11 a.m., SF Farms is fresh out of fresh eggs.

"I sold thirty-five dozen by 9 o'clock."

**

The cobblestone is flooding. Beneath an overhang, a hipster huddles on the sidewalk drinking coffee from a wide-lipped mug. No doubt she lives nearby. Let's hope she wasn't craving omelets.

**

At the Nature's Way Farm and Seafood booth, Bill Moller sells you-guessed-it.

"I've been fishing for forty-four years," he says. But the goat milk soaps and cheeses keep his customers lingering.

"We've got ten American Alpine dairy goats," says Bill, who claims his small farm in nearby Hampstead churns out more hard cheeses than any other North Carolina dairy.

Melt-in-your-mouth chèvre comes plain or flavored. The jasmine vanilla goat milk soap, made by Bill's wife, Tina, smells good enough to eat. I spy honey straws, fresh jams, and — what's that? — organic catnip.

"Not just for cats," says Alex, a sweet-faced twenty-something wearing a brightly colored head scarf. Try catnip tea to calm colds or relieve congestion. Most likely, it won't cause you to start making biscuits — or whatever you call the happy little march cats do while they're purring, digging their claws into the nearest soft surface.

**

I do a happy march to a vendor selling locally grown flowers.

"This weather's good for sitting on the couch and watching *The Real Housewives*," says the dreamy-eyed girl in a blue poncho.

Kaleidoscopic bouquets — picked and arranged in Castle Hayne — smell like heaven.

For a moment, the sun peeks through the dark clouds. The Battleship winks as the Cape Fear River rises.

Front Street may be home base, but senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

One for the Kids

Zach Hanner's delightful weekly live TV show is unique to Wilmington – and maybe America at large

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Many playwrights labor for years with a script; some manage to produce a show a year. But Zach Hanner writes, directs and performs in an original show every week.

"I say 'Super,' you say 'Saturday'!"

Super! (Saturday!) Super! (Saturday!)

The call and response begins, Hanner dons a captain's hat, adjusts his Lennon glasses and strums the opening strains of the "Super Saturday Fun Time" theme song. A roomful of excited, adoring children scream the refrain back to him. Though it feels like Hanner's own personal rock concert, it's well before noon on Saturday morning at TheatreNOW, the dinner theater venue on the corner of Dock and Tenth streets.

The idea of a weekly "TV show" for the stage is certainly not new to Wilmington. Local theater-going audiences will remember the long-running weekly live soap opera, "Shelf Life," at the now defunct Bessie's. More recently, Tony Moore wrote and produced "Sides," a live weekly sitcom at the Browncoat. And there have been a host of weekly sketch comedy shows. But thus far, a weekly live TV show for the stage written exclusively for elementary school-aged children is unique in Wilmington, possibly the rest of the country.

Maybe Hanner is the first to do this?

"I haven't heard of another one," he says.

"Super Saturday Fun Time with Dock the Dog and the Dock Street Kids" is like "Scooby-Doo" set right here in the Port City. Instead of Scooby, there's Dock, a friendly dog, played by Alex Holland, who helps his teenage friends solve a new mystery each week. Of course there's always a perilous adventure to be had and some frightening encounter with a monster of sorts (always played by Ron Hasson). Surprisingly, the villain turns out to be a man in a mask. Each week's theme is based around an aspect of Wilmington history, such as Thalian Hall, Oakdale Cemetery, Masonboro Island, or the Bellamy Mansion. "My parents were both educators," Hanner notes, explaining that usually Dock's gang has to go to the library to research clues to solve the mystery. In place of commercials, Hanner has short educational segments and original music with lots of audience participation. TheatreNOW has a great multimedia set-up so he also shows a surfing-related short film most weeks. One Saturday the surf short was about how to cut up a surfboard to take it as carry-on luggage when you travel and then reassemble to hit the beach. Since Hanner started surfing at age 13, and many kids in the audience learn to surf in elementary school, it's an interest he and his audience share.

The summer he was 19, Hanner worked as a counselor at Camp Sea Gull in Arapahoe, North Carolina. "They asked me to do a skit, so I dressed up like Pee-wee Herman," says Hanner, chuckling at the memory. The campers ate it up. After college, Hanner moved to Wilmington to cut his teeth on the theater scene and break into the thriving film business of the 90s. His first on-camera work was for *Forrest Gump.* His line was cut, but he was hooked.

Hungry for a taste of the big city, Hanner moved to New York for a spell, but in 2001, he and his muse-turned-bride, Dagmar Cooley, returned to Wilmington to settle. Hanner immediately found himself back in the land of children's theater starring as the Grinch in a Journey Productions show of

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

How The Grinch Stole Christmas. To say it was a hit would be a serious understatement. Hanner commenced writing a sequel to *The Grinch* for the next year that included a mini-grinch (Austin Powers was really big then). Then another sequel for the next year. "My whole take for children's theater is that Warner Brothers cartoons were really written for adults. I was basically just ripping off Bugs Bunny, the Marx Brothers and *Little Rascals*."

It was a busy time. Besides playwriting, Hanner was working on his film career, performing with the Comically Impaired ("Wilmington's Most Retired Improv Troupe"), freelance writing, starting Da Howlies, a Hawaiian band that still plays together and, most importantly, he and Dagmar adopted their son, Beck, now 8. "Beck came to the last of *The Grinch* shows when he was a baby," Hanner says with a smile.

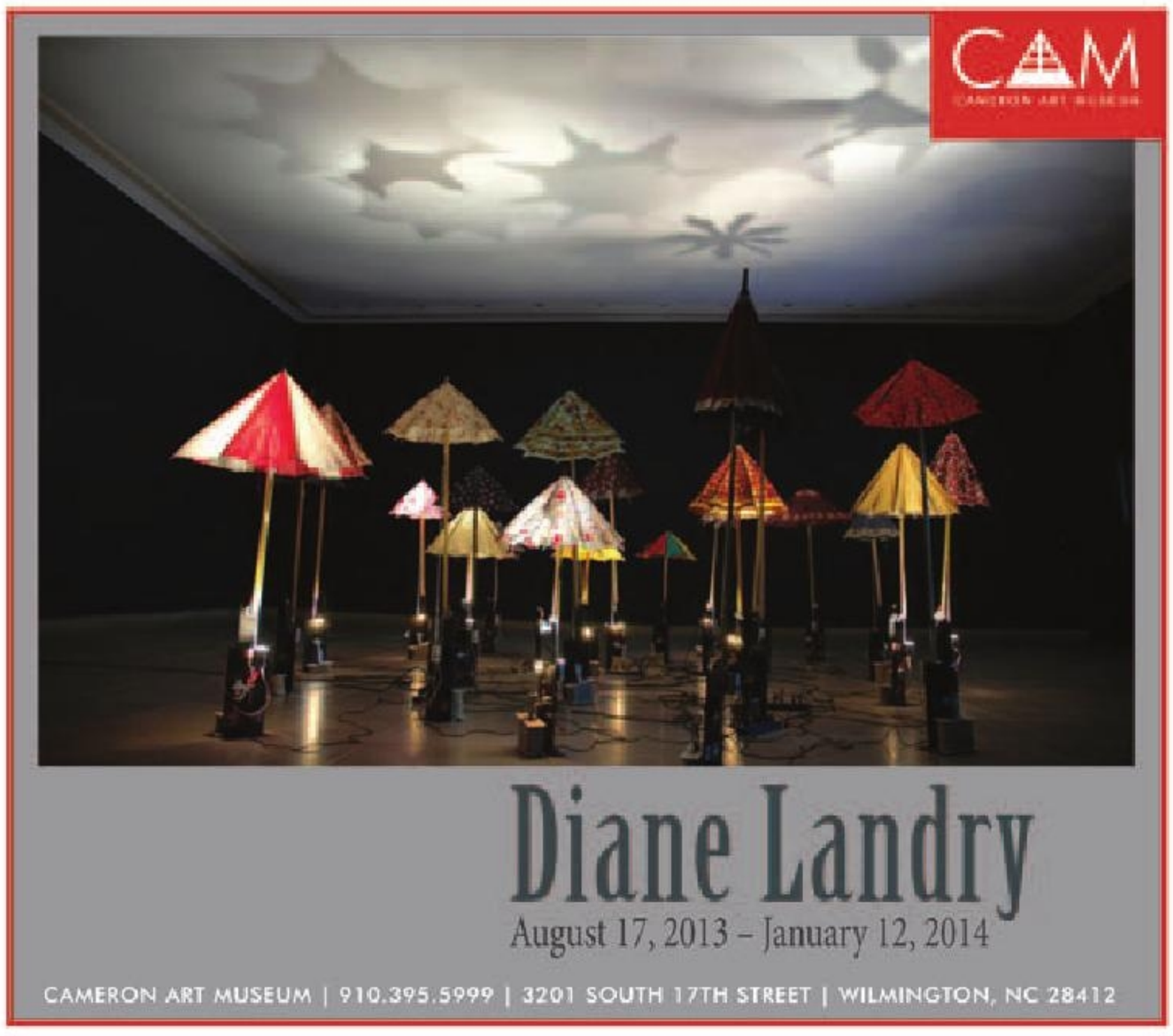
The Super Saturday Fun Time cast. L-R: Ron Hasson, Alex Holland, Beth Raynor, Liz Bernardo, Hank Blanton and Zach Hanner.

Writing and directing children's theater is just as much teaching children how to perform as it is teaching them how to be part of a team and constructive ways to communicate. "We talk about the 'Living Script' a lot," says Hanner. "If you've got an idea that you think is great — show me. We'll find a way to work it in. If you want to create a bigger part for yourself, then write it down."

"Super Saturday Fun Time" is a bit of a departure for him because it's theater by adults for kids — unlike *The Grinch* shows, with casts of primarily children featuring a handful of adults. Getting the kids up on stage to play percussion during the musical numbers is one way Hanner keeps the flavor of his earlier writing. In June he went a step further and let the audience "shred on the electric guitar!" He is a man of great courage.

It can be tiring to prepare a new full show every week, but his audience is waiting, kicking the legs of their chairs, most of them not tall enough to reach the floor yet.

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.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"A String of Pearls"

In the days after World War Two, Wilmington's elegant Plantation Club was the place to be seen – and remain invisible

The Plantation Club. Front row, left to right: Ernest I. King, Henry Omirly, Ed Browning and Abe Rubin. Back row: unidentified.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NICHOLAS OMIRLY

By Susan Taylor Block

So, a Greek and a Russian Jew

walk into a bar . . . Sounds like the prelude to a punch line, but that was exactly the situation at Wilmington's popular Plantation Club. Henry Omirly, the Greek, and Abe Rubin, a Jew from Russia, owned Wilmington's premier World War II-era nightclub. But that place was no joke.

The Plantation Club was a chic escape for those who could afford to dine there – and some serious secrets lurked within.

Located about three miles south of Shipyard Boulevard on Carolina Beach Road, the approach to the club was almost rural. Once inside, guests could imagine they were in Manhattan, not a small Southern city that was experiencing a case of serious population bloat. The wartime shipyard alone employed 21,000. The Officers' Candidate and Anti-Aircraft Artillery School at Holly Ridge brought tens of thousands to Camp Davis. Many were willing to thumb their way to Wilmington for reprieve from "Boomtown."

Truly, there were a lot of mouths to feed, and the government was harvesting the richest foods to feed Allied soldiers. Like hosiery and gas, steak was rationed, so an exceptional one tasted even better. Somehow the Plantation Club proprietors found ways to buy them.

Wilmington native Peggy Moore Perdew recalls the delight of it all. "That was the only place in town that served steak, and their steaks were delectable," she says. "My appetite was usually not big at that time, but I remember coming home after a date took me there and telling my mother all about the meal. She replied, 'You ate a whole steak, Peggy?'"

Food was just one element of a dreamy evening at the Plantation Club. Choice beverages, popular music, muted lighting, opulent décor that included elegant statuary and fine paintings, and a staff of stylishly dressed and beloved servers were all part of the experience. The timeline notch was fortunate, too, for newly born big band songs like "A String of Pearls" spread romance and an optimistic air across the dance floor.

No one seems to remember how Henry Omirly and Abe Rubin came to be friends, but it is no surprise. Henry was very close to many members of Wilmington's Jewish community, especially the Kingoff, Zimmer and Schwartz families, one of whom, Maxine, was his cousin. Both men liked to gamble a bit, too, and could easily have met at a poker table. Legend has it they hosted high-stakes events on nights when the restaurant appeared to be closed.

Rubin made a good gamble when he bought into the business. He helped establish the menu and influenced the décor. Henry Omirly built and eventually

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Locals at the Plantation Club, about 1943: Harry James, Peggy Moore (Perdew), unknown, and William Southerland.

owned the building, managed the business, booked the entertainment, wrote the menu, and masterfully oversaw seafood preparation. According to his son, Nicholas, Omirly's ancestors were Greeks who moved to Asia Minor, where they became some of the first Christians converted by St. Paul. They worked as shippers, merchants and bankers until the Ottoman Empire fell in 1922 and the Republic of Turkey was created. The violence during this time took the life of his father, robbed his family of their assets, and ended Henry's formal education at a Constantinople university. He managed to smuggle his mother, sister and brother to Athens, but found himself drawn to America.

Henry's ancestors' surname was Polizoides, but officials in Turkey's new government changed it to Omourloglou. When he reached Ellis Island, officials made his signature a lot easier by shortening it to Omirly. Soon, he landed a job as a food service manager for the federal government project that created the Intracoastal Waterway. Of all the coastal towns he visited, Wilmington was the one that beckoned. He quickly made warm ties with Wilmington's Greek community. In 1937, with partners Peter Compos and John Kalagis, he built and managed Palais Royale, a three-story hotel at Carolina Beach. It was good experience for what was to come.

Abe Rubin was born in 1904 and came to America, alone, when he was only 18. The first job he landed was a managerial position at a race track in Florida. In 1930, he became a salesman for Block Shirts, Inc., of Wilmington, and spent most of his time selling shirts wholesale throughout the Southeastern states. Eventually, he was asked to manage the Block office in Atlanta.

Rubin quickly became friends with William Block, who managed the shirt factory and kept abreast of world news through Yiddish newspapers. Like Rubin, Block had come to America alone. The remaining members of his family still were in Riga. Both men shared the same fear that one day the family members they left behind would fall victim to Nazi horrors. Block brought his concerns to the attention of Wilmingtonians well before most Southern folks were aware of the danger. As early as 1933, he led local efforts to provide funds to relocate "stricken Jews."

Verbal campaigns usually came in whispers. The early effort was aimed at moving them to Palestine, where a handful of Block's own relatives had fled. He also sponsored a few individuals who moved to Wilmington first, then moved to bigger cities after a short time.

Add to Rubin's angst Henry Omirly's worries for the Jewish branch of his own family tree that called Thessalonica home. Doubtless, all three men helped the cause financially, and encouraged others to help. The Blocks even bought a farm across from Poplar Grove Plantation to allow their family members who were still stranded in Riga to escape with agricultural visas. Just before they sailed, the Riga Blocks were seized, sent to concentration camps, and never heard from again. Henry Omirly's relatives in Thessalonica shared the same fate. So did all but a handful of Abe Rubin's family. It was a trio of tragedies.

I met Rubin — or Abie, as my husband, Fred Block, called him — at a Miami nursing home in 1991. He was 87, and was dressed in dapper clothes of quality that were colored in subtle hues. When I asked him where he was born, he replied, "I'm really not sure if I am from Russia or Germany. They kept changing the borders." Although he had mastered English with ease, he retained one obvious clue that it was his second language: he always pronounced "Vs" as if they were "Ws."

"Abie's accent was valuable. It sold a lot of shirts," says Fred. "He would point to small vents in summer shirts, and call them 'wents.' It drew people in. He did well."

Rubin's involvement in the Plantation Club made it a natural choice of venue for many of Block Industries' events, and for rousing musical renditions by popular civic leader and self-taught pianist Hannah Block, whose name is now memorialized in the USO Building at Second and Orange streets. Rubin was on hand, too, when Dr. Melvin

PHOTOGRAPH THIS PAGE FROM MARGARET MOORE PERDEW

Schwartz, son of Benjamin and Maxine Schwartz, had his bar mitzvah at the club.

Though neither the segregated job assignment, nor the name of the restaurant, was politically correct, the African-American wait staff at the Plantation Club was a distinguished and honored group, held in affection by those who knew them. Sadly, identifications for most of them have gone missing, except for Ernest I. King (pictured in black tuxedo). King was a man of many talents who managed all the club's employees and had the last word in many of the daily operations. In addition, he was a guest columnist for the Wilmington *Journal*; a band member and comedian in various local stage shows; a leader and historian for Wilmington's St. Thomas Catholic Church; and a teacher at Williston School and chef at Gregory School. He also was a national force and speaker for the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's group that in 1977 disbursed over $20 million for benevolent causes.

Backing up everyone who worked there was host and part-time bouncer Kid Ellis, a former middle-weight champion wrestler. As a Wilmington native, Ellis was well-known around town and got his start wrestling with neighborhood locals in Dry Pond. Later, he fought matches in many different cities. In 1920, he contended with a better known champion, Paul Bowser, at Wilmington's Academy of Music (Thalian Hall). He lost the match, but, being a local, must have felt like he'd just played tuba at Carnegie Hall.

The entertainment was diverse, ranging from Wilmington's Belcher Dance School to exotic Latin dancer Patty Forrest to Broadway singers and a classical tenor. Although several good bands played at the Plantation Club, few white people realized there were black nightclubs at Nixon, Fourth and Castle streets at the time that hosted the likes of Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton and Count Basie. According to the late local jazz musician Nick Ponos, as far as other white entertainment spots went, the Plantation Club's only rivals were the famous Lumina Pavilion and Emory's, a much more casual establishment. The Plantation Club survived World War II by a few years, but it is still remembered as a wartime elixir.

Glenn Miller's signature song does seem a good theme for a place where ladies wore pearls, tragedy took a back seat, and music spoke louder than words.

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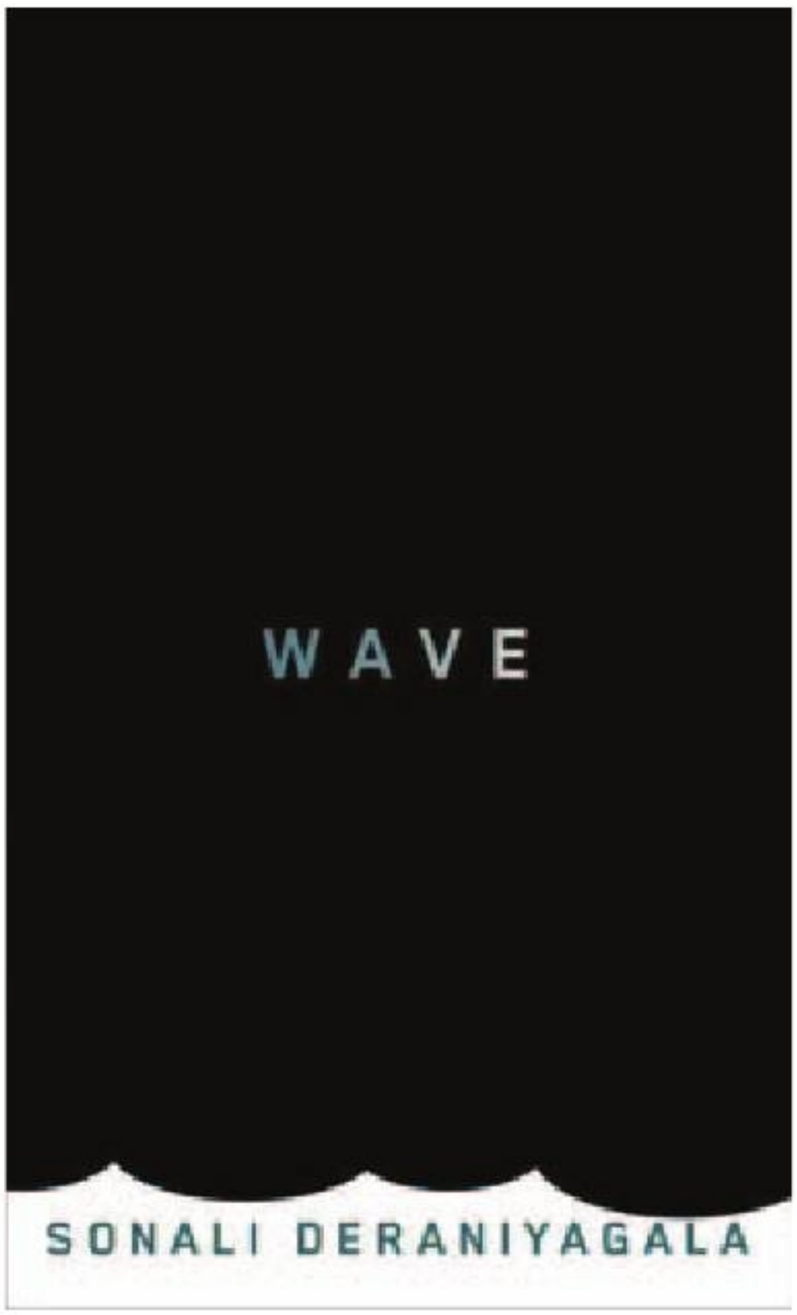
Lost

The memoir of a lone survivor and her unassailable grief



By Stephen E. Smith

The December 26, 2004, Indian Ocean tsunami killed an estimated 230,000 people in twelve countries, making it the deadliest tsunami in recorded history. In human terms, the enormous number of casualties inflicted by the wave is incomprehensible, but for each singular statistic there's a personal story of sorrow. Sonali Deraniyagala's *Wave: A Memoir of Life After the Tsunami* is an unsparing account of one survivor — a wife, daughter and mother — who has endured unimaginable loss.

Deraniyagala teaches now in the department of economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and is a visiting research scholar at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, but on the morning of the tsunami, she and her husband, Steve, their two young sons, Vikram and Malli, and her parents were staying at a hotel in Yala, a national park on the southeastern coast of Sri Lanka. Deraniyagala was standing in a doorway chatting with a friend when she noticed a wave edging up the gentle slope to the hotel. She called to her husband, "Come out, Steve, I want to show you something."

The sea continued to rise with startling rapidity, and Deraniyagala and her husband and children fled their room, leaving her parents behind in the hotel. "I didn't shout to warn them. I didn't bang on their door and call them out." The family climbed into a Jeep that was already moving and made it to the end of the driveway, where the vehicle filled with churning water. Deraniyagala and her husband lifted the children so their faces would be above the surge, but the Jeep flipped over, and in a split second, she was swept away. The five people she loved most in the world perished in the tsunami, but Deraniyagala managed to grab a low-hanging branch and survive. What lay before her, the initial shock and the unrelenting, overwhelming sorrow, is her story to tell — and she tells it with brutal honesty.

Following the disaster, Deraniyagala somehow made her way to her aunt's home in Colombo. "The front door of the house was open, neighbors and relatives wandered in. They were told about me. Everyone looked at me aghast. She's lost her children? And her husband and her parents? Some of the visitors left quickly and returned with more people saying, look at this poor lady, isn't it unbelievable, her whole family is gone. I was slumped in that brown armchair. Is this me they are talking about?"

Readers are likely to experience a similar reaction to Deraniyagala's story. The loss she suffered is so overwhelming that it's difficult to grasp. Merely reading her descriptions — rendered in disquieting detail — makes her anguish palpable. How could anyone suffer such pain and carry on? readers will ask.

Deraniyagala's experience is not analogous to the stages of grief that pop psychology would have us believe is the norm — sadness, loneliness, anger, anxiety, fatigue and pain. Her initial reaction to the loss of her family was physical in nature: "I stabbed myself with a butter knife. I lashed at my arms and my thighs. I smashed my head on the sharp corner of the wooden headboard of the bed. I stubbed out cigarettes on my hands. I didn't smoke, I only burned them into my skin." She was intent on killing herself, but a devoted group of friends and family kept guard over her constantly.

For months following the tsunami, Deraniyagala couldn't leave her room. She was terrified of everything. "I couldn't look at grass because I didn't

want anything to remind me of our life, remind me of them. I wanted to guard myself against any kind of memory." Every object in the physical world, no matter how mundane, summoned up moments spent with her lost family. She recalled with frightening clarity her children's every habit, her husband's words and gestures haunted her, she imagined her parents living still in the empty house where she grew up. And she was racked with survivor's syndrome because she mourned some family members more than others. She drank heavily and abused prescription drugs and passed through a phase where she directed her anger at the Dutch family who had rented her parents' home. She banged on their locked gate, constantly called on the phone and hung up, parked her car in front of the house at night and leaned on the horn.

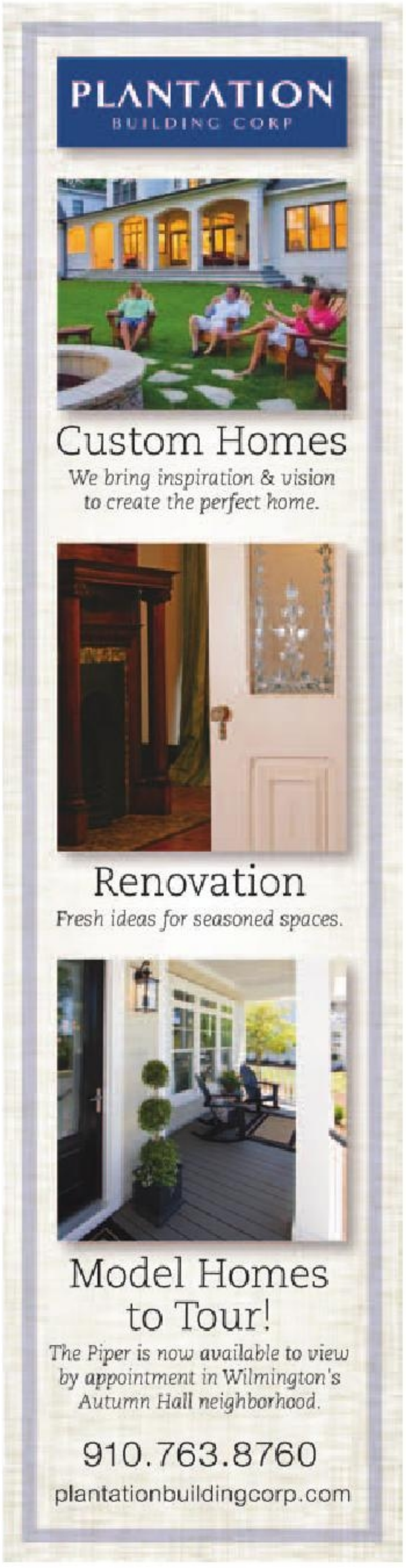
Deraniyagala's acute psychological reaction to the tragedy is interwoven with the history of her relationship with her husband, parents and children. She revisits family outings, listens to the music they loved, eats at restaurants they once frequented — all of which intensify the reader's understanding of her torment. "I remember the four of us driving home to North London on our last Sunday in England. We'd been to Fortnum & Mason to buy a Christmas pudding for my mother. Steve wanted to show the boys the new offices his research institute was moving to . . . . It was raining, and I was in a hurry to get home. 'Do it when we're back in January,' I said."

So what is the worth of such a memoir? Will it assuage the anguish of those poor souls who are, God forbid, similarly burdened by fate? Probably not. Will readers who have experienced comparable loss find solace in the story of Deraniyagala's painful struggle toward recovery? Again, it's unlikely.

The value of Deraniyagala's memoir is in what it doesn't say directly — that grief, even in its mildest manifestations, is unavoidable, and there's no easy or convenient path to healing. One's personal history never goes away, and there's no such thing as "closure." "But I have learned that I can only recover myself when I keep them near," Deraniyagala writes. "If I distance myself from them, and their absence, I am fractured. I am left feeling I've blundered into a stranger's life."

Perhaps the best we can do is become accustomed to the truth. Who among us can go on living without arriving at a degree of reconciliation with those we've loved and lost? And after all, this life of averages spares no one.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com.*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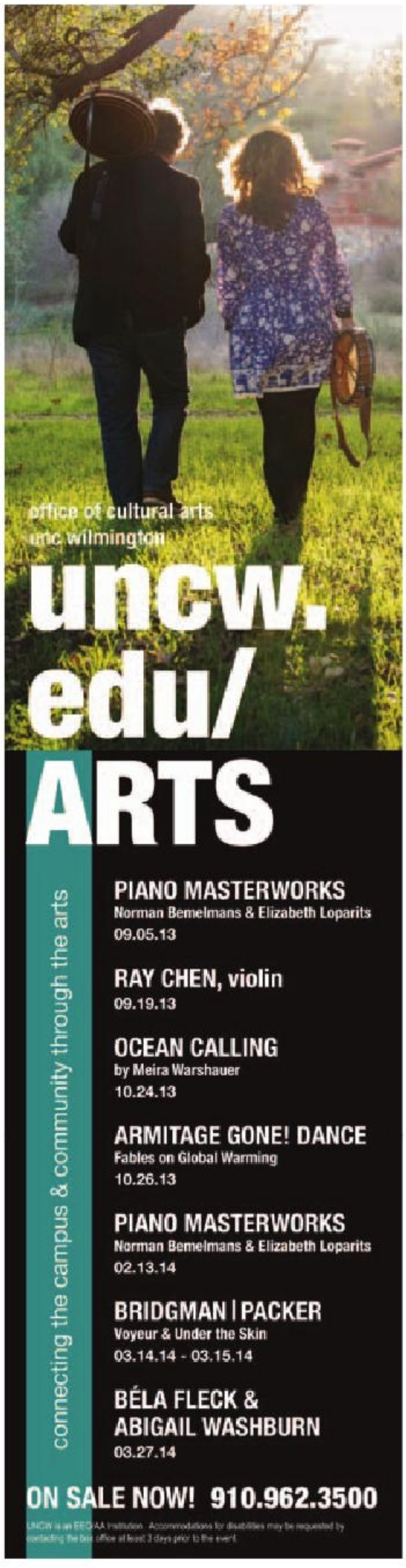

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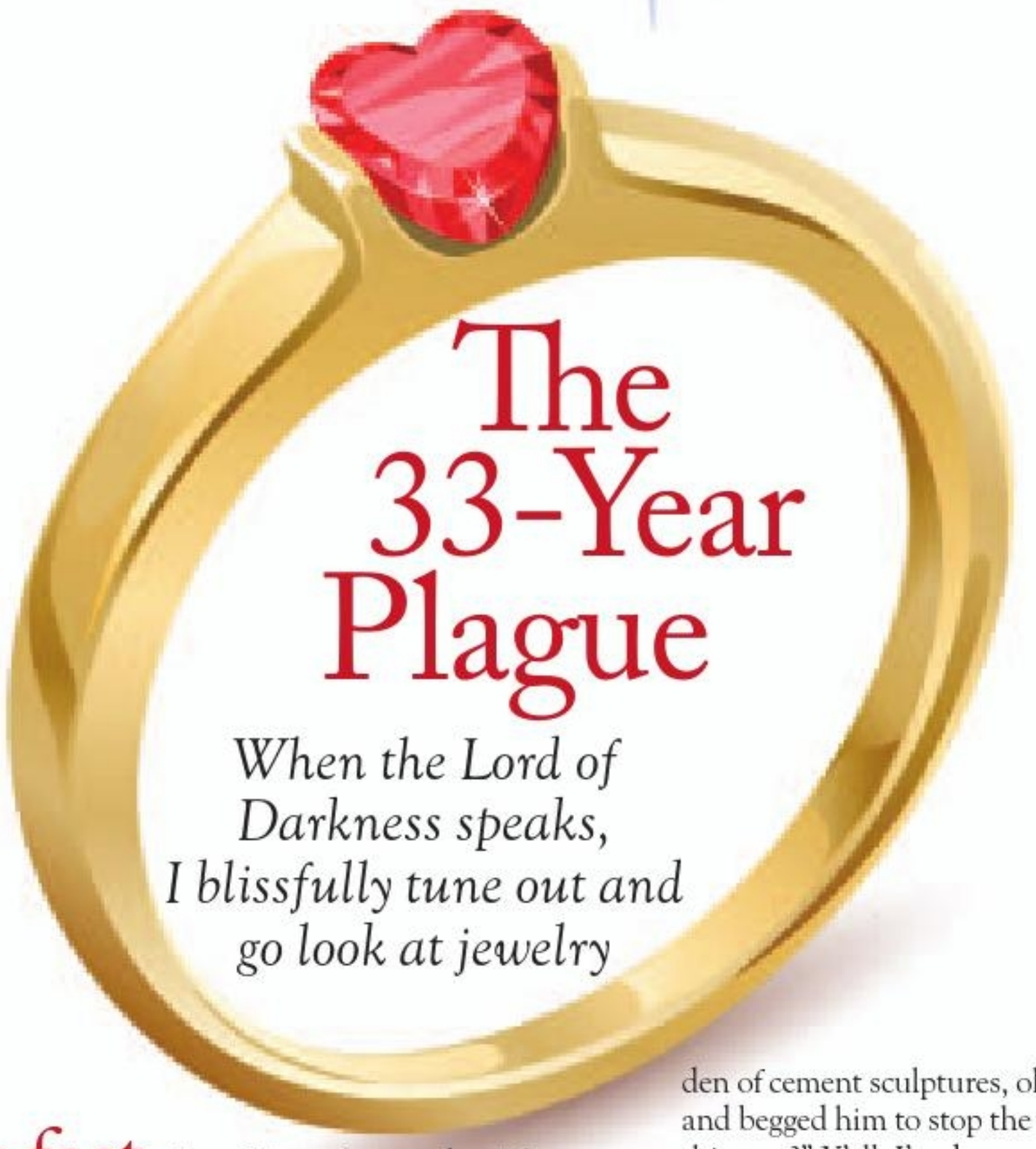

The 33-Year Plague

When the Lord of Darkness speaks, I blissfully tune out and go look at jewelry

By Ann Ipock

Despite the fact that I'm plagued with darkness, I try to look on the bright side of life.

That plague, by the way, is my husband, Russell. Perhaps you know the type as Oscar the Grouch, Negative Ned, or some equally appropriate alias.

Over the course of our 33-year marriage, you see, he's squashed my dreams more times than I can count. No, don't dig up the "good centipede" to plant those "sorry flowers." No, that wicker sofa absolutely won't fit on the front porch. (As a matter of fact, yes it does. And it's called a settee, sweetheart.) No, we can't watch *House Hunters International* when State and Carolina are vying for the College World Series. Geez!

Oh, don't worry. I don't listen to him most of the time. Determination is my middle name.

Russell also has road rage, and would you believe that it peaks every Sunday morning on the way to church? I pray that no one gets hurt (especially us) and, Lord, please tell me that's not a fellow church member he's hollering at. Sometimes I duck down so no one sees me. Other times I try asphyxiating him with my fingernail polish touch-ups.

Lest you think I'm without faults, Russell says I have a few. Quite a few, actually. But who's going to believe him?

He calls me Prissy Pollyanna, Sunshine Susie and other names I can't repeat. Well, I say, one of us has to be optimistic. While he's searching for that dark cloud, I'm right behind him, pointing out the silver lining. I say the glass is half full. He says, "Drink up, quick! You might not get any more!"

On a recent trip out in the country, while I was admiring the beauty of rural America — seriously, y'all, it was like looking at a Norman Rockwell painting through every window — the Lord of Darkness was fumbling with the dad-blasted Garmin, which as he said, "got on his last nerve." We rounded a bend and came upon one of those wonderful farmers supply places — a lean-to made of old barn wood with a gravel parking lot and a garden of cement sculptures, old signs and potted flowers. I oohed and aahed and begged him to stop the car. He said, "Haven't you killed enough plants this year?" Y'all, I'm doomed. I am doomed. Or maybe I'm not. Pollyanna doesn't give up that easily.

The funny thing is, Russell is obsessed with golf. But, when I try to think like him — what all could go wrong — it's a wonder he loves the sport. He could fall into a sand trap. (Don't laugh, this past spring a golfer in Michigan fell into a sinkhole in the middle of the 14th fairway!) He could get hit in the head with a thrown golf club or, worse, struck by lightning! Ask him about his handicap and he'll point to me (Pollyanna). Rude, I know, but at least he doesn't get road rage in the golf cart.

At this point, you may be asking why I married the grump in the first place. Believe me, I've asked myself the same thing more than a few times. Back in 1979, when we met, I guess you could say I saw potential. I knew he'd clean up pretty good. In fact, I somehow convinced him to shave that burly-man beard and trim that curly-permed hair (I am not making this up). Although he did make a very handsome groom on our wedding day, he tugged and pulled at his tuxedo throughout the entire ceremony. I'm sure he was itching to get back into his jeans and Top-Siders.

But marriage does have its perks. Most important, two beautiful daughters and two darling grandbabies. A nice home. Several memorable cruises to the islands. Oh! And don't let me forget about the jewelry . . .

On every tenth anniversary, I pick out a beautiful ring to commemorate the milestone. Yup, I pick it out and I pay for it. Come to think of it, he owes me a lot of money!

But something tells me Oscar will never pay me back. I can see his frown right now, as he laments: "Shoot! I've already spent that money on a new set of clubs. And besides, don't you think you have enough jewelry already?"

Ann Ipock is an award-winning Southern author, humorist and speaker whose books include the Life is Short *series. She may be reached at amipock@ec.rr.com.*

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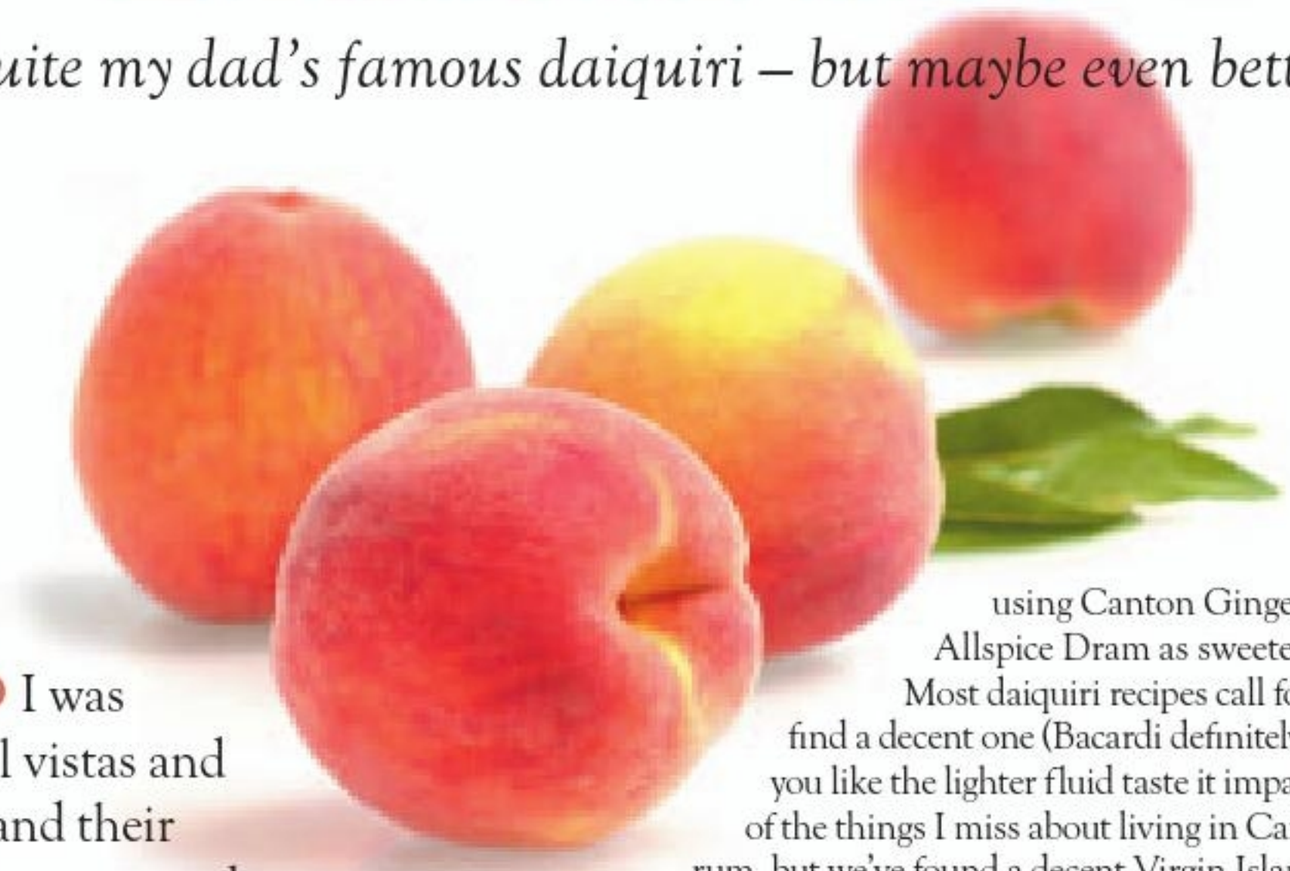
Drink a Peach

Not quite my dad's famous daiquiri – but maybe even better



By Frank Daniels III

A few years ago I was introduced to the wonderful vistas and people of western Canada, and their superb, but incredibly short, summers by my soon-to-be wife, Carol. As we were sharing stories of summer, I asked her if she'd ever had a peach. She laughed and said, "We don't live in igloos, you know!"

Not to be deterred, I said, "Sure, but I mean fresh peaches, not canned. . ." She forgave me my ignorance, and I came to know the very good and tasty peaches of the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia, and the excellent peaches from the Niagara region of Ontario when we lived in Toronto, but as good as those peaches are, they don't represent the kind of tradition I grew up with.

Road stand peaches.

There are many things that symbolize summer in the South, but few are as vivid to me as stopping at a Carolina roadside stand on the way to the beach and picking up vegetables, tomatoes and peaches. I loved the way my father relished these stops, chatting with the farmers and their kids like he was their neighbor, and letting a little of his inner redneck come out.

He'd put the baskets in the back of the Vista Cruiser and we'd eat like kings every evening. But the real treat were the sliced peaches, sprinkled with a little sugar and served at every meal, on cereal or pancakes at breakfast, on the side at lunch, and for dessert nearly every night. And best of all were the times Dad would pull out the churn and make fresh peach ice cream — to this day I choose peach ice cream as my favorite food.

As we got older, the adult version of peach ice cream became a summer staple, the peach daiquiri. And as good as Dad's peach ice cream was, his peach daiquiris were even better.

Over the years we've experimented with recipes and worn out a lot of blenders as we learned to make the perfect peach daiquiri. One of the lessons learned is that we still must strive for that perfection. Darn!

We've all contributed to the recipe and our tastes have changed a bit during the years, ebbing and flowing on sweetness, and how to improve the texture. We tried banana, but have settled on mango as the best complement for taste and texture. More recently we've done away with adding extra sugar and started using a variety of liqueurs to augment the natural sweetness of the peach. We started with peach schnapps, but more recently have been using Canton Ginger Liqueur and St. Elizabeth's Allspice Dram as sweeteners and flavor enhancers.

Most daiquiri recipes call for white rum, and if you can find a decent one (Bacardi definitely should be avoided unless you like the lighter fluid taste it imparts to the drink), use it. One of the things I miss about living in Canada was the excellent Cuban rum, but we've found a decent Virgin Islands white rum from St. Croix, Cruzan Aged Rum, and Prichard's Crystal Rum from Tennessee has a clean taste that works. I like to mix the white rum with Gosling's Black Seal dark rum for its rich color and excellent aroma.

We love our Waring Pro blender, and it is still the best made blender you can buy, but I confess that the Margaritaville Frozen Concoction blender is fantastic.

Discovering the frozen fruit section at Harris Teeter has been a wonderful way to extend summer to anytime the weather warms, but there is no substitute for the warm road stand peaches we still pick up on the way to the beach, often well into September.

Enjoy.

Peach Daiquiri

Makes six indoor cocktails or three outdoor cocktails.

- 4 oz White rum (Cruzan Aged or Prichard's Crystal)
- 4 oz Dark rum (Gosling's Black Seal)
- 1 oz Fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz Liqueur (or 1 Tbs sugar)
- 1 cup Frozen peaches (fresh roadside peaches when available)
- 1 cup Frozen mango (fresh mango when available)
- 1 1/2 cups ice
- Fresh peach slices

In a good blender pour the rums, lime juice and liqueur, add the fruit and blend. Add the ice and blend until smooth.

For indoor serving: Pour into chilled cocktail glasses and garnish with fresh peach slices. For serving outdoors: Pour into insulated glasses (and start preparing the next batch!).

Frank Daniels III is an editor and writer living in Nashville, Tennessee who frequently visits Wilmington. His cocktail book is Frank's Little Black Bar Book, *Wakestone Press. Contact him at fdanielsiii@mac.com*

Brain Food

Epic gluten-free fried chicken and unforgettable Brussels with hustle

By Dana Sachs

When you're 50, you know that you're not young anymore. Here's what you don't know: anybody's name. When I was 30, I could list the names of every single person I'd met at a party. Now, I sometimes run the other way when I see a familiar face at Harris Teeter. Is she Mary? Marilyn? Melanie? I have no idea.

That sudden blankness in the brain compelled me to invite Julian Keith to lunch. Julian, along with Dale Cohen and Len Lecci, all of whom are professors in the psychology department at UNCW, runs the MARS Memory-Health Network, which offers baseline testing and early diagnosis for memory disorders.

Julian and I got together at Epic Food Co. in the Forum, a year-old restaurant run by chef James Bain, formerly of the beloved Harvest Moon. Specializing in fresh and healthy meals made from locally sourced ingredients, Epic has sit-down service at dinner and a paper check-off-the-items-you-like-and-order-at-the-counter menu for lunch. You can choose from a selection of proteins (chicken, beef, salmon, tofu) to add to dishes like Thai Wrap, Padang Flatbread, or Benne Salad, a process that makes the Epic dining experience a cross between the popular create-your-own salads at Brasserie du Soleil and the hip and inventive burrito combinations at Flaming Amy's.

As soon as we sat down at our table, I asked Julian the question I've been pondering since my birthday last September: What can I do to stop forgetting so many things?

"Actually, a lot," said Julian, who proceeded to give me advice that combined hard science, nutritional facts, fitness instruction, and Buddhist-inspired spiritual guidance, all of which, I now realize, are the exact tools you need to face getting older. "Pay attention to the here and now," he said. "When you're at a stoplight, focus on the stoplight and all the cars around you." Though the logic may seem counter-intuitive (is there anything more mind-dulling than sitting at a stoplight?), Julian explained that "age-related memory problems are really age-related attention problems." Focusing on the things that are actually in front of you will help to tame your "Wild Monkey Mind," or the kind of distraction that sends your thoughts in a dozen different directions.

"I thought I was supposed to do crossword puzzles," I told him. I had been imagining a grim future of crosswords plus a lot of Sudoku.

But Julian shook his head. "That's just gimmicky," he said. "I don't think there's any evidence that crossword puzzles help. Instead, go study Chinese,

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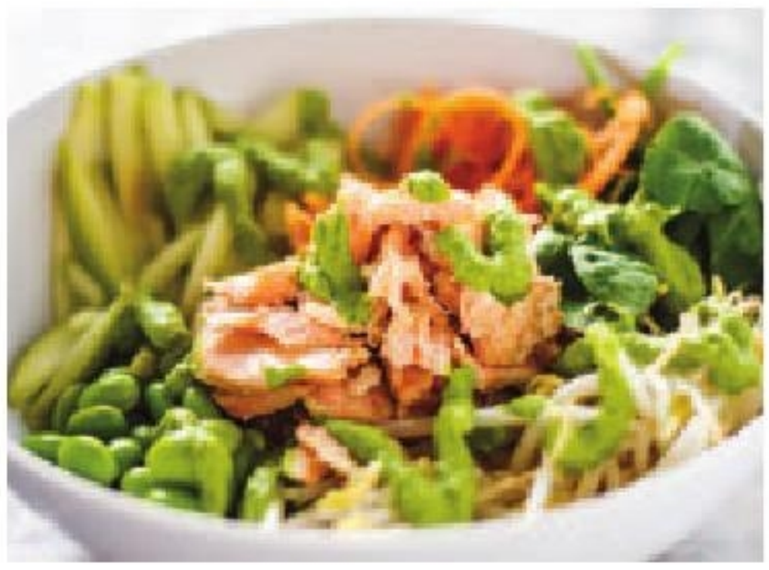
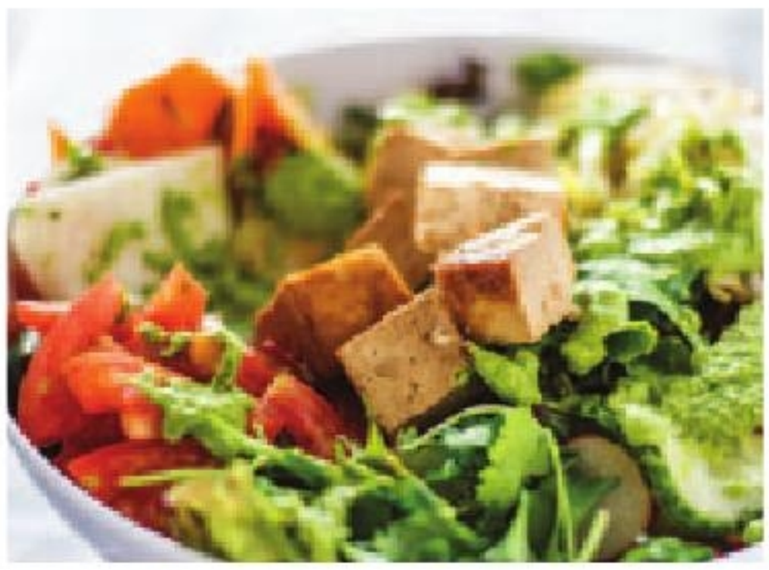

meet new people, learn to surf at age 65. Our brains were built by nature to socialize, exercise, solve real-life problems. If you engage with things, that's what the system was supposed to do."

My joy over not having to do crossword puzzles was compounded by the arrival at our table of two dishes, Gluten Free Fried Organic Chicken with Tabasco Honey and Brussels with Hustle, a salad of sliced raw Brussels sprouts, beets, greens, and goat cheese (these are usually dinner items, but the chef let us try them). Julian, who has celiac disease and thus can't eat anything with gluten in it, picked up a piece of the chicken and took a bite. "I have a whole memory bank of eating fried chicken since my childhood," he told me. "Once I was diagnosed, though, I couldn't eat it. Until now."

If you're used to a KFC version, which seems to be about 60 percent chicken and 40 percent crust, then "gluten-free fried chicken" probably sounds like an oxymoron. Epic's version fries the chicken itself, though, without the added goopy batter. As you eat, your attention centers on the meat, crispy on the outside and juicy and flavorful within. You can actually taste the chicken.

I can imagine that Julian, who is also in his fifties, still looks pretty much like he did as a teenager: tall and lanky, with sandy hair, a sly grin, and that expression of perpetual wonder that is probably genetically linked to choosing a career in science. He pulled the plate of chicken closer and picked up a second piece. "This chicken will make you want to have celiac disease," he told me, maybe only half-kidding.

Did you know, by the way, that that bucket of KFC might be one reason you can't remember the name of the guy who married your cousin Sally? According to Julian, there's a direct correlation between what we put in our mouths and how well we think. "You need the micronutrients, minerals, vitamins, the anti-inflammatories that you get in this food," he said as he started into his Eden Brown Rice Bowl, a combination of finely chopped vegetables and rice topped with salmon. "Why don't schools have food like this? If schools serve fake pizza and whatever nuggets, the students don't have what they need for brain function."

Before you cross Epic off your list because it sounds too healthy, let me remind you that James Bain became famous in Wilmington for refined versions of Southern classics, and the food at Epic is both substantial and delicious. The Brussels with Hustle, for example, is hearty and succulent, setting the sweetness of beets against the sharp tanginess of goat cheese. "You get a different combination of flavors with each bite," Julian noted. "And textures. There's a little something crunchy with each bite, and something soft, too."

More facts: Did you know that the brain is an energy hog? The average brain weighs only three pounds, but it consumes about a quarter of the calories the body takes in. "The brain is working hard," Julian explained. "The tissue in there never rests, even when you're sleeping."

Ah, yes, sleeping. Julian offered two final tips for keeping your brain in good shape. Sleep well ("If you take people and sleep deprive them, you automatically take ten points off their IQ, and raise their risk of dying, too.") and — I know, you're sick of hearing it — exercise. ("The whole reason your brain exists is for movement, to justify and guide action. When we exercise, we use the brain for what it's for.")

It's true that all the talk of eating right, sleeping well, and exercising can get a little wearing. I have a couple of responses to that. The first, from Julian, calls forth our sense of awe. "If we knew how our brains actually worked," he said, "we'd all fall down on our knees and go, 'Oh, my God!' The more we know, the more amazed we are about what it means to be human."

And the second is more practical. Admonitions go down fairly easily when you're biting into a chicken and spinach flatbread, laced with fresh vegetables and dressed with spicy peanut sauce. It also helps to consider the fact that each bite of healthy food promotes the possibility that, when you're getting ready to leave the house tomorrow morning, you'll remember where you put your keys.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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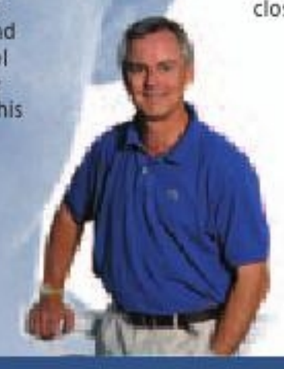

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Lee Crouch as a young boy preparing for a sailboat race. Wrightsville Beach, circa 1968.

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The Funny Uncle of Grapes

Making sense of pinot's diverse charms

By Robyn James

Pinot, pinot, who's got the pinot? Perhaps the most repetitive word in discussing grape varieties, it can be attached to about five different grapes: pinot noir, pinot gris, pinot chardonnay (actually an outdated term), pinot meunier (used in Champagne) and pinot blanc.

Why so many pinots? Because pinot noir is the funny uncle of the grape varieties. It is genetically unstable and all the other pinots (except chardonnay) are mutations of this finicky, unpredictable red grape.

I find pinot blanc to be the quiet, interesting little offshoot of the funny uncle. It is not unusual to take a stroll through a pinot noir vineyard, whether it is in California, Oregon or France, and find clusters of pinot noir grapes that have mutated half the cluster to pinot blanc. You may even find one grape itself that is half white, half red.

Pinot blanc was originally cultivated in the Burgundy region of France, of course, where the finest pinot noir vineyards in the world reside. Burgundy winemakers pretty much dumped pinot blanc to pursue chardonnay, the white grape that shares the royal Burgundy vineyards with pinot noir today.

Pinot blanc was embraced by French Alsatian winemakers, and today it is one of the most widely planted grapes in Alsace. Because Alsatian winemakers don't truly recognize the unstable pinot blanc as a documented varietal, they often blend it with pinot gris, pinot noir and auxerrois and still label the wine "pinot blanc."

Pinot blanc is commonly considered an alternative to chardonnay, and winemakers can finish this wine as diversely as they do chardonnay. Maybe a malolactic fermentation to instill a buttery feature, maybe not. Maybe barrel fermented for vanilla and wood influence, maybe neutral stainless steel. Like chardonnay, pinot blanc is adventuresome and fun to play with.

Although Oregon wineries are commonly compared to the Burgundy region of France for the quality of their pinot noirs, they have shied slightly away from chardonnay in favor of the grape varieties associated with Alsace: pinot gris and pinot blanc. In the 1980s Oregon winemaker David Adelsheim led a program to import two clones of pinot blanc directly from Alsace to Oregon and planted them on Bryan Creek Vineyard on the Chehalem Mountains at elevations similar to Alsace, France.

Here are three different styles of pinot blanc that reflect the dimensions the grape can achieve. Have fun playing with them!

Domaines Schlumberger Pinot Blanc, Les Princes Abbe's, Alsace, France, approx. $18

All estate-grown fruit from the steepest and most arid vineyards.

Dry and lip-smacking, offering flavors of crunchy green pear, white peach, lemon zest and stone, with a zesty, mineral-tinged finish. Drink now.

Valley Of The Moon Pinot Blanc, Sonoma, approx. $14

"Tastes like a chardonnay, with tropical fruit, peach and green apple flavors wrapped into buttercream and vanilla. Ripe and sweet, but balanced by crisp acidity. A nice, rich white wine for drinking now."

Rated 86 Points, The Wine Enthusiast

Adelsheim Bryan Creek Vineyard Pinot Blanc, Oregon, approx. $24

"Adelsheim does a superlative job keeping stylistic consistency. This high acid, lemony pinot blanc has a fine mineral underpinning and a fresh, clean attack."

Rated 89 Points, The Wine Enthusiast.

Master Sommelier Robyn James has been in the retail and wholesale wine business for over 25 years.

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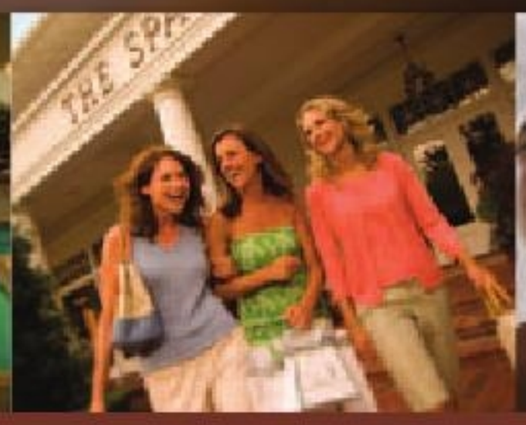

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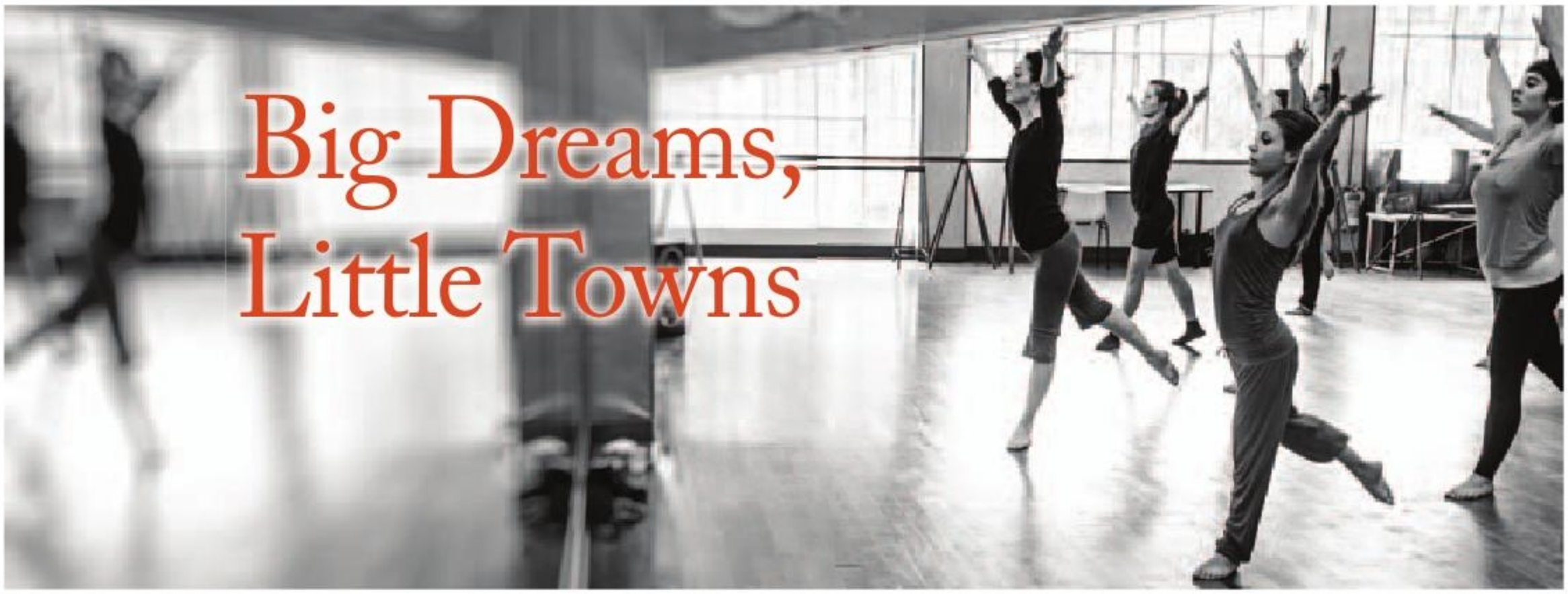

Big Dreams, Little Towns

By Bill Thompson

They're a part of every city, town and community in North Carolina. Some are small, comprised of only one long, open room with floor-to-ceiling mirrors on one wall. Others are more impressively housed in multi-storied buildings, multiple rooms with special lighting — even dressing rooms. One I know is a great big open double-wide trailer.

Sometimes old gymnasiums — or any old building that's spacious enough for dancing — are transformed into studios. There are studios for adults who want to be more sociable, or they may have been inspired by *Dancing with the Stars*, or they may just want to see if they can "trip the light fantastic." (That's a phrase only those who have that particular need would understand.) They are dance studios or "schools of dance." I like to call them Dream Palaces.

Most dance studios are filled with children. Some are there because their friends are there or because Mama made them. But some choose to be there, to continue year after year because something inside them tells them to dance.

So on that scheduled day they leave school and go straight to dance practice.

I visited a Dream Palace recently — an old hardware store turned studio out in Whiteville.

As I walk in the music surrounds me. The reflection of the dancers in the mirror multiplies into infinity the number of bodies moving around the room. The chant, one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight, is repeated by the instructor. The dancers respond in unison. It's a jazz dance and the movements are quick and energetic. I notice some of the girls looking first at the girl next to them, then the mirror, then the instructor, in a rhythm that almost matches the music. They are working hard.

In the corner of the small studio, book bags and knapsacks lay temporarily abandoned as the owners, adolescent girls emerging into young-womanhood, work on their routine. The items represent the outside world — the world of academia, of sports, of "a social life," of everything except dancing. Even the ubiquitous cell phones are silenced. For just a little while the dancers focus on the music and their bodies, on the effort to make their movements more than physical, to create art by translating the music from mind to body.

". . . five, six, seven, eight . . . and . . . no, no, no!"

Sometimes the transformation is difficult. There are frequent stops and starts. Some frustration, even tears. But there are far more smiles than tears, more compliments than corrections.

"Five, six, seven, eight, and . . . stop."

The instructor compliments the girls and reminds them of their next practice and the upcoming recital. Chattering and laughter begin as they gather up the pile of outside-world paraphernalia. Beads of perspiration are visible on their faces, and their T-shirts are sweat-stained. There is no glamour here, and no brightly-colored costumes — yet. That is part of the dream to be on a stage, to show everybody the result of their work; the beauty of it all comes together later in the dream.

As those girls head out, other girls come in. They have been waiting in the lobby. These are older girls, some with many years of experience, committed to the hard work that may lead to the life of a professional dancer, maybe on Broadway or the world stage or maybe a teacher who will inspire others to . . . yeah, dream the dream.

These young ladies are clad in more traditional dance attire: tights and legwarmers in every shade of black. They stretch their legs on the barre opposite the mirrored wall. Some sit on the floor or do sit-ups as they prepare to attempt the more difficult moves they have developed through the years. I learn that these are ballerinas. I don't know much about the technical aspects of ballet, like what constitutes a plié or an arabesque, a brisé or en pointe. But I can appreciate the beauty of the movements when the music begins, the symphonic sound and the sweep of the dance as the dancers move.

I watch these young dancers turn and leap, their arms and legs in graceful movement, then stop as the instructor corrects or compliments them.

Then, five, six, seven, eight and begin. The dancers pick up the steps choreographed just for them and somehow they are transported from that little studio to a giant theater with hundreds of people in the audience and a real, live orchestra and a stage ablaze with lights illuminating dancers in beautiful costumes and spectacular scenery and . . .

Big dreams can grow in little towns.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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Black Skimmer

Keep an eye out for this beautiful seabird

By Susan Campbell

Without a doubt, the black skimmer has one of the most unique foraging styles of all the birds you will see along our coast. As the name implies, this long-beaked seabird feeds by skimming across the water and slicing its knife-thin bill through the surface while in flight. Their success is based on the fact that their extremely sensitive lower mandible is longer than the upper one. When a skimmer encounters a fish, the top part of its bill reflexively snaps shut to ensure the prey is caught. As soon as the bird swallows, it once again assumes its unique head-down posture and prepares to catch the next fish.

The black skimmer is found along the East Coast in the summer. In North Carolina, the species breeds and loafs on sandy beaches, but only if undisturbed. In coastal communities where people and other ground predators are numerous, black skimmers are more likely to be found on small islands adjacent to inlets. These islands, most of which originated from dredge spoil, are food-rich environments that offer safety from nest robbers such as fox, raccoon, opossum and the like. Not surprisingly, such island habitat has become critical for nesting waterbirds in general. And given the fact that so many species, including black skimmers, are communal nesters, established breeding sites tend to be busy — and certainly noisy — places.

In addition to their unusual orange and black bill, black skimmers can be recognized by their black upper parts, white forehead and under parts, and bright orange legs. With relatively long, pointed wings and a stout, forked tail, they are very maneuverable in flight — an invaluable trait for a bird that pursues small, fast-moving prey. Even if they are not foraging, they can be recognized by their flight posture since the head is always carried lower than the tail. When the birds are not feeding, the long bill becomes somewhat of a liability. Individuals are frequently seen with their heads down and necks outstretched on the sand. This resting posture, too, is unique to the black skimmer.

The nest of a skimmer is a mere scrape in the sand. Eggs are buff-colored with dark blotches that provide excellent camouflage against a backdrop with shell and rock fragments. Similarly, the two or three downy young are mottled brown. In the absence of their parents, they are known to scratch into hollows and kick sand over themselves in order to remain hidden. Due to the shape of their bills, adults must regurgitate onto the sand rather than directly into the mouths of very young nestlings.

As is the case with many bird species, black skimmers form large flocks outside of the nesting season. They can be seen skimming synchronously in lines or rows over schools of herring, mullet or other small fish. Given that they find their prey by feel and not by sight, they are frequently seen feeding at dawn and dusk as well as at night. This likely reduces competition with gulls and terns, which require bright light for successful fishing.

So keep an eye out the next time you are on the water. You just may encounter one of these amazing, low-flying skimmers.

Susan would love to hear from you. Send wildlife sightings and photos to susan@ncaves.com or call (910) 949-3207.

Victors of the Spoils

Life is teeming on the dredge spoil islands of the lower Cape Fear

Pelicans

By Virginia Holman

If you look at old nautical charts of the lower Cape Fear River, you can get a sense of how the river has been altered by man to serve his immediate purposes. One significant addition in the last two centuries is the chain of dredge spoil islands. Because the lower Cape Fear is a strong tidal river that is closely bordered by and empties into the Atlantic Ocean, the river's natural tendency is to shoal at its mouth. Hurricanes, nor'easters and other large storms can shift massive amounts of sand into the river from tidal overwash. Occasionally, storms will create or completely fill inlets from the ocean to the river.

When Fort Fisher was built in 1861, it was strategically positioned on a small peninsula bounded by New Inlet and the Cape Fear River. New Inlet was formed during a storm in 1761, and it was used during the Civil War by numerous blockade runners seeking safe passage. After the war, New Inlet came to be seen as a nuisance that deposited sand in the river and imperiled commercial shipping. So from 1875–1881, the New Inlet Dam was erected to close the inlet. This apron dam spanned the area from Fort Fisher to Zeke's Island. In 1891, another portion of the dam, known simply as the Swash Defense Dam, was completed, creating a second dam that extended from Zeke's Island to Smith Island. Today these two dams are known locally as "The Rocks," and the entire structure spans over three miles. This engineering marvel allowed the Cape Fear to remain open to ocean vessels. Even so, dredging has remained constant in the Cape Fear in order to deepen the shipping channel for ever bigger commercial vessels. These days most dredge spoil from the river is used for area beach replenishment, but for decades the material removed from the bottom of the river was simply deposited adjacent to the main channel for no reason other than it made a convenient dumping ground. Over time, some of these islands grew grass. Others grew trees and shrubs. All were deemed uninhabitable by humans.

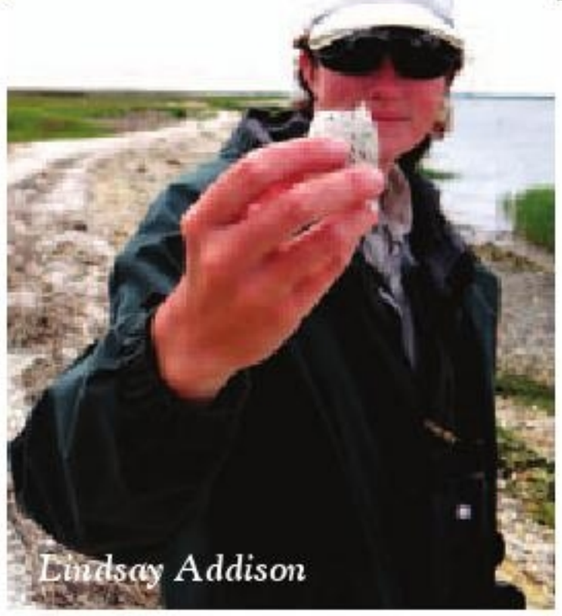
When the population exploded along the North Carolina coastline in the mid-20th century, undisturbed beaches and marsh areas formerly used by shorebirds as nesting grounds were decimated. However, some shorebirds in our area took canny steps to thrive. They colonized the spoil islands in the river. In 1975, professor James Parnell at UNC Wilmington noted that a wide variety of shorebirds was nesting on these small man-made islands and with a team of colleagues, he began to study the islands' importance to birds. His work resulted in the Army Corps of Engineers partnering with Audubon to maintain and monitor these islands in order to study and protect the birds that use them.

How significant is the lower Cape Fear area to nesting birds? Well, of the seven islands in the lower Cape Fear considered Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by Audubon, three are globally significant IBAs (Battery, Smith Island and Ferry Slip Island) and six of the seven are considered state-significant IBAs. The majority of these are man-made dredge spoils.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

Royal Tern

Snowy Egret


Lindsay Addison

In order to get a better understanding of these islands and their importance, Lindsay Addison, North Carolina Audubon's coastal biologist, invites me to observe her work on the islands. Lindsay monitors the islands several days a week. All the IBAs are posted and strictly off-limits to humans and animals from April 1 to August 31, and it's rare for anyone other than Lindsay to set foot on them during nesting season. Even small human or animal disturbance of these islands can cause an entire bird colony to collapse and fail.

Lindsay and I meet at the Carolina Beach State Park marina on a fresh, windy morning. She's in her early 30s, a wiry blonde with a no-nonsense demeanor. The brim of her Audubon baseball cap is so sun-bleached and tattered that it appears to be fringed. The chop is already up in the Cape Fear, and with the cool north wind increasing and the flood tide against us for the next three hours, it's going be a bumpy ride in Audubon's 23-foot, robin's egg blue Jones Brothers bateau.

Lindsay grew up in Florida, and has piloted boats for much of her life. It's clear from her comments about the local landscape that, in addition to birds, she is quite knowledgeable about the lower Cape Fear. I'm reminded how complex the river can be when she deftly steers us away from a small shoal which, combined with a large wake from a passing vessel, has caused some sizable waves and clapotis, and our boat pitches and rocks a bit too much for my comfort level. It brings to mind a locally famous quote by Captain Clayton Smith of Allied Towing, who noted in a *Star-News* interview in 1975 that "people think of the river as romantic, but it's a dog's breakfast."

Our first stop of the day is North Pelican Island. Lindsay maneuvers the skiff to a small beach, cuts the engine, and hops into the water to set the anchor. Then she enters the island to complete her survey of the nesting birds. It's a bit chilly out today, so she's wearing long pants, now soaked from ankle to knee. In addition, she pulls on a green, long-sleeved jacket. This, I soon discover, is not to thwart the cold. Our arrival agitates hundreds of laughing gulls and pelicans, and they cry and wheel overhead, strafing us with abundant white guano. I don't have a rain jacket, but at least I'm wearing a hat.

Lindsay is here to work, and she knows human presence stresses the birds, so she's quick and efficient about her tasks. She posts signs, counts birds, nests, eggs, and monitors the chicks from hatch to fledge. She wants to be on and off each island in a timely manner. "Make sure to follow me exactly," she says, and sets off toward the southern end of the small island to survey the nests. On our approach to North Pelican Island, we were upwind; now, on the southern end, we're downwind. Here the stench of bird feces is intense enough to make my eyes water for a moment, and I pause to dab them with my sleeve.

Lindsay motions me around a bend. There, huddled in the low seagrass, are the white-capped skulls of at least a hundred adult nesting brown pelicans. Lindsay instructs me to wait while she makes a quick survey further inland, then invites me to look at a few select nests. As we approach one nest, I can see two recently hatched pelican chicks huddled together. Their skin is featherless, dark gray, and covered with small bumps called papillae. The chicks look like tiny pterodactyls. As soon as I raise my camera to photograph them, an adult pelican swoops across the island, lands on the nest, and spreads its wings wide in a grand threat display. I quickly back away and leave them in peace. The laughing gulls are still flying above us. They nest on the island as well. When the pelicans hunt, they are joined by a chorus of gulls, who hope to scavenge a meal. Farther in the grass, I see several egret with their young. North Pelican also hosts nesting black-crowned night heron, tricolor heron, American oystercatchers, great egret, and cattle egret.

Lindsay records her notes, pulls up anchor, and then we're off to Ferry Slip Island. We'll visit five islands today: North Pelican, Ferry Slip, Shellbed Island, Striking Island, and Battery Island. Not all of these islands are spoil islands. Shellbed is a natural formation, but all are essential to bird life. Part of Lindsay's job is to maintain accurate counts of the nesting birds and their young. Of particular interest this year are American oystercatchers. Oystercatchers are charming, noisy clowns with bright red eyes and a long orange colored bill, which they use to razor open mollusks. They tend to mate for life. Lindsay tells me that with the advent of GPS tracking, Audubon is now able to do more than simply band these birds. Several birds now have a tiny, lightweight satellite backpack that transmits a bird's location. Recently, she's been tracking Arnie, an oystercatcher nesting on Ferry Slip Island.

Ferry Slip Island doesn't look like a particularly special place, just a low, grassy island with lots of sand and some shelly areas. The gulls are swarmed above us, but the island doesn't seem as loaded with bird life as North Pelican. "Watch each step and follow me," Lindsay says, and we're off. Within seconds, I understand why she's so cautious. Oystercatchers don't create a big obvious nest for their young; they simply scrape an area in mostly unvegetated sand, rocks or shells. It seems every third step I spy a scrape with two or three speckled eggs that easily blend with the landscape. Then Lindsay stops to photograph something in the wrack line. It's a young oystercatcher chick, fluffy, and wad-

Ibis

dling unsteadily. She looks for its scrape and moves it back so the gulls don't kill it. "Where are your parents?" she says. Once we start walking again, I see oystercatcher chicks are everywhere on this island, tucked under a few blades of seagrass, while the parents lurk nearby to thwart the seagulls.

"You should be right around here," she says. For a moment, I'm confused. Then, I realize she's tracking Arnie, the oystercatcher with the satellite backpack. She spies Arnie through her binoculars, locates the nest, and sees it has two small brindle-colored chicks. She's beaming. We take a few photos then hurry away.

Lindsay explains that six oystercatchers in the country are being tracked for one year through the American Oystercatcher Tracking Project. The project is the result of a collaboration between Audubon North Carolina, North Carolina State University, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Toyota's TogetherGreen project. This project allows scientists to understand more about individual bird behavior such as migratory patterns, preferred breeding and wintering habitats, in order to better improve conservation efforts. The transmitters worn by the adult birds are tiny and weigh just over half an ounce. In addition, Dr. Ted Simons at North Carolina State University has supplied the project with large camera buckets, which are strategically placed on the islands to record data. These cameras take photographs every few seconds, and Lindsay periodically collects the photos and analyzes many days' worth of data.

We cast off for Shellbed Island. Shellbed is not a dredge spoil, but a naturally occurring shell formation in the Cape Fear. It's made up mostly of old oyster shells and spartina. This island is popular with oystercatchers but also hosts a variety of arctic breeders such as short-billed dowitchers and dunlin. Lately, though, Lindsay has noticed a sad trend with the oystercatcher nests. The eggs are eaten. She holds up an oystercatcher egg with the top neatly gnawed away.

"Rats," she says.

I recoil a bit. "Rats?"

"Shellbed is inhabited by marsh rats and cotton rats. They belong here, too. Normally, they eat the spartina, but this year, for some reason, they've gone after the eggs. We don't know why." Lindsay repositions one of the bucket cameras to see if she can catch one of the rats in action. The bucket cameras are heavy, about 50 pounds. Inside each bucket are two large batteries that power the camera. The lens is located on the side of the bucket.

As she walks around Shellbed Island, she shakes her head at how many nests have been consumed by rats. Perhaps some footage will give her a better idea of what's occurring here. We get back in the boat to tour the east side of the island and she seems cheered to see a few new nests.

South Pelican Island, our third stop, is a marvel of bird life. Even from the shore, I'm awed. The air and shore are thick with royal tern, sandwich tern, and a few black skimmers. The royal tern have their summer plumage, which makes them appear to be sporting black flat-tops. On the island we also see willet, and snowy egret nests. Most are ground dwellers, except for the egret. Lindsay motions me over to some tall grass. There, positioned high in the stalks, is a beautiful platform nest with three blue eggs. Farther inland, I see several snowy egrets with their chicks. They are elegant, silky plumed, yellow-eyed birds. In the late 19th century they were nearly hunted to extinction. Their plumage was in such great demand by milliners that, in 1898, Audubon and ornithologist T. Gilbert Pearson were able to locate only eight breeding pairs in the Cape Fear region. Protections were put in place in the state, and eventually a healthy population was restored.

Our final two stops are Striking Island and Battery Island, located near the mouth of the Cape Fear River near Southport. If Lindsay was discouraged by the oystercatcher situation on Shellbed, she is delighted by the oystercatcher nests that have appeared on Striking Island since her last visit. She anchors the boat, marks the location of the nests with her GPS, and records data about the eggs. As soon as she's done with one nest, we see another, and another.

"So many scrapes! This is great." Then, we swing around to the east side of the island and she stays in the boat to count some tern. "Oh, look." She points out an unassuming bird. "That's a gull-billed tern. We get a few of those each year." Then she points out a few more. Then she sets down her binoculars for a second. "Well, look at that! I have a gull-billed tern colony."

Battery Island, our final stop, has always been one of my favorite spots. Unlike the other spoils, Battery has trees, and for birds that like to roost, such

as ibis, Battery provides an ideal habitat. The ibis is an ancient species of wading bird. One species of ibis, the sacred ibis, was revered in ancient Egypt as a protector against serpents. However, due to vast wetland destruction, the bird is now extinct in Egypt. White ibis have a red face, long red downward curving bill, and black-tipped wings. Upon our approach it appears the trees on shore are laden with enormous white blossoms. These are white ibis, and their numbers have grown over the past three decades largely due to the long-term efforts of Walker Golder, North Carolina Audubon's deputy director. This year, Lindsay estimates that the island has 7,000 pairs of ibis. Some years that number swells to 14,000 pairs or 28,000 adult nesting birds. During the day, one ibis will stay near the nest to roost, while the other flies elsewhere to forage. If you've ever wandered along the Southport waterfront to take in a summer sunset, you've likely seen clouds of white ibis returning to Battery Island for the night. It's a truly splendid event.

We spend a good while digging postholes to replace some signs that were lost in the last storm. Since Battery is close to Southport and Bald Head/Smith Island, and is in a more heavily trafficked section of the river, the extra signage reminds people that this globally important IBA island is for the birds alone. Once the signs are in, she invites me to the interior of the island while she checks the ibis nests. The ibis themselves roost on the exterior branches, but the nests are hidden deeper in the trees, on thick branches. The light beneath the canopy is dappled, and I'm surprised to see how dark the ibis chicks appear. They are so young they still appear slack and dopey. Even the adult ibis, raising a ruckus above us, don't disturb them. We're in and out in under a minute. Ibis are exquisitely sensitive to human intrusion. Luckily, it's easy to take a small craft and view the ibis from the water. In fact, I find it easier to view the spectacle of so many birds at a distance.

Lindsay and I take a few more photos and then board the boat for the ride back upriver. The wind is now with the tide, and the river is delightfully free of boat traffic, so our return should be smooth. Lindsay flips her cap backward, so the wind doesn't steal it, opens the throttle, and we speed toward home.

Virginia Holman teaches creative writing at UNC Wilmington, and kayaks the ocean, rivers and flatwater year-round.

Interested in the Cape Fear IBAs? Book a tour!

Cape Fear Garden Club runs a tour each summer narrated by Walker Golder and professor James Parnell. Info: www.capefeargardenclub.org.

In addition, Captain Bert Felton runs regular tours of the lower Cape Fear Islands on his historic North Carolina workboat, the Solomon T. Info: www.solomontshouthport.com

Interested in protecting the birds?

Contact Audubon North Carolina about volunteer opportunities and donations. Info: www.ncaudubon.org

Interested in the American Oystercatcher Project?

Follow Arnie and the other oystercatchers here: www.oystercatchertracking.org

You can also easily learn more about oystercatchers and other waterbirds on one of Audubon's weekly tours. These tours meet at the gazebo at Wrightsville Beach Access No. 43 each Friday at 9 a.m., May through August. No reservation is necessary.

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August

Night Sea

Last night I ventured to the sea
When shattered by a shocking dream,
Sleep no longer soothed.
Strange, I saw the sea was sleeping,
Almost still, as though at rest
Between the tide of day, the tide of night.
The water did not lap or crash or pull
Against the hardened sand.
The water rests as I could not.

Beside the water children danced
Their wings of silver shimmered
In the waning moon
A cipher in the blackened sky.

Their lips formed words of distant, soundless songs
Remembered well,
From sun-drenched days on sun-bleached sand.
With tousled sun-streaked hair.

I watched, transfixed.

The children danced until the blush of dawn
Awoke the sea, no longer calm,
Now rustling into day.
Their wings slipped off and sailed a tiny boat
Straight out until it reached the line
Where sea meets sky
And life meets dream.

And angel children wait, again to play.

— Deborah Salomon

Robert Ruark

How the Cape Fear shaped the boy and the man

By Philip Gerard

He was a man's man, tall and strong, a crack shot with a rifle, an avid fisherman. He could drink most other men under the table, and this became his undoing. At age 49, he was all used up, his liver shot, and dying in a London hospital.

Once in his younger days, dead broke, he challenged the mate of a tramp steamer to a fistfight just to win a berth on the ship as an ordinary seaman. He lost the fight but won the berth. Later, he served as a naval gunnery officer on Atlantic convoy duty during World War II.

He was often photographed wearing a coat and tie, sometimes even a gentleman's ascot, but he looked more honestly himself in rough outdoor clothes — khaki trousers, a field shirt, a shooting jacket, a well-worn slouch hat. That's how he dressed on safari in Africa, where he found a second home — following in the footsteps of Ernest Hemingway, a literary idol who haunted his own reputation.

Some would call him the poor man's Hemingway. When the famous writer shot himself to death in 1961, Robert Ruark told his African hunting guide, Harry Selby, "Haraka. I'm now the herd bull. Do you realize that? I'm the herd bull." Selby had been mentored by Philip Percival, the great white hunter who guided Hemingway. Ruark outlived Hemingway by only four years and a day.

He was not handsome so much as striking, the most memorable character at any party — not debonair but with definite features, a hard chin and steady piercing eyes, a mustache that was never trimmed too carefully, receding hair, and big capable hands — almost always holding a cigarette. To his friends he was just "Bob."

He could spin a yarn and tell a bawdy joke with the best of them. And he possessed unflagging energy. He boasted that he wrote his books by working all night fueled by gin. This was as much a complaint as a brag — his life was frenetic by any measure. In 1952, at the height of his powers, he published twenty long magazine features, more than 250 newspaper columns syndicated in 150 newspapers, and wrote *Horn of the Hunter*, a 300-page novel about an African safari, which he illustrated with dozens of original sketches of camp life. In addition to all this, he took extended trips to Europe and Africa. And no matter how much money he made, he spent it faster. He was a prisoner of deadlines and debts, a creature of bad habits he could not shake — womanizing, gambling and drinking.

Through it all, he remained married to Virginia Webb for twenty-four years, then inexplicably filed for divorce shortly before his death.

Photograph by Ned Leary

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FORT JOHNSTON SOUTHPORT MUSEUM & VISITORS' CENTER'S ROBERT RUARK EXHIBIT

In the rough and tumble world of newspapers — no reporter dared call himself a "journalist" in those golden days — he scrambled to the top, writing for big city papers in Washington, then in syndication from his base in New York City, a place he hated so much that, once he left it, he never lived there again: "There's a glitter about the city all right but it is phosphorescence like that of a dead fish — and there's a bad smell around."

He made millions writing best-selling novels set in exotic locales in Africa, where he loved to hunt, and he lived in an actual villa in Spain.

In his break-out bestselling novel *Something of Value*, he chronicled the brutality on both sides of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya — for which he was banned from the country. His invented characters were played on the big screen by Rock Hudson and Sidney Poitier.

He was a roaring egotist, a friend for life, a good man in a tight spot. At the height of his career, he was probably the most famous syndicated columnist in the world, read daily by an estimated fifteen million people.

His beginnings really had been humble: born in Wilmington to a family that fell on hard times along with much of the country during the 1930s. Both his parents turned to the bottle. Money was tight. He had no college fund, scraped through the University of North Carolina wearing shabby clothes and bootlegging homemade whiskey to wealthier classmates. During the graduation address by Eleanor Roosevelt, he and three of his pals got blasted on a vile mixture of rubbing alcohol and grapefruit juice. Then they attempted to drive to Wilmington and ran out of gas. The cops nabbed Ruark for siphoning gas from other cars, and he spent his graduation night in jail.

Maybe that disastrous road trip was on his mind when he returned to North Carolina around 1960: He arrived in a Rolls-Royce, which he had shipped from London. It was both a homecoming and a victory lap, a chance to show that the hometown boy had made good in the great world.

But really, when all was said and done, Robert Ruark remained in his heart the little boy who used to tramp the fields and marshes of Southport, the quiet town at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, with his grandfather, with whom he stayed in the summertime.

His mentor and confidant, from infancy until the age of 15, was his maternal grandfather, Edward Adkins, a river pilot and fisherman who tutored him in handling a shotgun, flushing quail, hunting deer, and fishing the surf and sound. Together they built a small boat that he would row into tidal creeks and into the rougher water near the ship channel. He learned to be self-reliant and stoic, taking danger in stride, all the while inventing wild adventurous storylines for himself. He was Captain Blood in search of buried treasure, or Zane Grey reeling in a marlin off New Zealand, or Robinson Crusoe marooned on a desert island.

His fame was generated by his sardonic columns about everything under the sun: women, war, booze, labor strikes in Australia, hunting in Africa, politics everywhere. And his books made him rich. They came in two flavors: sarcastic and worldly, like *Grenadine Etching* (billed as "a very historical novel") and *Grenadine's Spawn*, both of which spoofed the popular genre of historical romance; or bluntly realistic and unsentimental, like *Something of Value*.

Yet he never achieved the literary stature of Hemingway. Readers and critics have long pondered this phenomenon: how Robert Ruark, a writer so famous and popular, such a world-renowned celebrity in his day, could be so quickly erased from the literary canon and from popular memory.

The answer seems to me pretty simple, and it has something to do with honesty, which shows up on the page as that elusive quality called style.

He approached his newspaper columns like a man doing a well-paid chore: "I don't intend to give you any 30,000-feet-in-the-air punditing," he writes. "Maybe I'll give you some labor talk on a day when they're picketing the little restaurant across the street from me, or I'll give you sports when I know something about them . . . But mostly I'll give you boys, girls, men, women, dogs, alligators and strip-teasers. After all, you got to remember what business you're in — and so I figure my primary purpose is to sell some newspapers."

It's a humble enough approach, but like so many Southern writers, Ruark couldn't resist the urge to become a humorist, in his own hard-boiled way. In *I Didn't Know It Was Loaded*, derived from his columns, he writes, "Nearly two years ago, during a misguided moment in Wilmington, North Carolina, I rattled out a quick piece on Southern cooking. It was my idea that everything wrong with the South could be traced to its cuisine, which in many instances was unfit for consumption by anyone with digestive juices inferior to a goat's . . . Mammy's little baby likes shortnin' bread. But Mammy's little baby is about to grow an ulcer from Southern cooking."

To the contemporary reader, his humor sounds too often strained and dated: "I don't know what's got into women since the war. There has been

more moiling and toiling, more soapboxing, more caterwauling about discrimination, more railing at matrimony, more divorces, more husband murders, more agitation . . . I don't know if they can use psychiatry or a solid smack on the fundament, but they are standing in the need of something."

So the columns really don't wear well. Most newspaper columns don't — they are of their times, not meant for the ages.

The novels are stronger, expertly imagined, often gripping and well-plotted, but there is still the sense of effort, of trying a little too hard, of creating a voice that is not quite his own in a style that sounds vaguely British, with a nod toward Hemingway.

In a passage about Peter McKenzie, the African-born hero of *Something of Value*, he writes, "Tom's estimate of Peter was not based so much on the sweeter side but on the utter competence with which he tracked . . . In three months they had shot nothing that was not eaten or, if inedible, was not a candidate for the Valhalla of game, the records of Messrs. Rowland Ward of London. There had been some very tight squeaks, or so it seemed in retrospect, but the squeaks had been oiled with a foreseen preparedness for just this sort of squeak — twice with the buffalo, once with the lions, several times with the rhino."

In *The Honey Badger*, Alec Barr, a stand-in for Ruark (or so the critics say), is a jaded, womanizing writer living in New York. Recovering from a night of drunken debauchery, he goes to a Yankees game. "A sudden lassitude struck him, the same small-feverish, bone-weary, emotion-drained feeling he had sometimes experienced at bullfights, when the faena was authentic and the matador and the bull were working very well together, anticipating each other's needs. He felt spent; used, satiated. DiMaggio's triple had pulled a plug in his feelings."

It's hard to know what to do with writing like that, especially over the course of more than 500 pages. It's vivid, intense — and also a bit fake, in the sense of being too self-consciously constructed. The bullfight isn't Alec's — it's Ruark's, reminding us of his own well-traveled worldliness. It doesn't mean that his novels are bad — they aren't. They are better than most of what you'll find on the best-seller shelf of any bookstore.

But here's the thing that matters: When Ruark writes about his own boyhood, he is a straight genius.

Just as he belonged in rough clothes rather than dandy suits, his prose is at its strongest and most honest when he writes about home and his grandfather, Edward Adkins, the figure he immortalized as The Old Man. For years, Ruark wrote columns for *Field & Stream* magazine in which he reveled in his boyhood adventures and recounted the colorful tales he heard from the Old Man.

In *The Old Man and the Boy* and *The Old Man's Boy Grows Older*, the two books that grew out of those columns, Ruark speaks in a friendly, plain, conversational voice. He's not ramping up the sarcasm or trying to appear sophisticated, or inventing world-weary dialogue for the mouths of jaded characters caught up in violence.

Here is one of a hundred brilliant passages from *The Old Man and The Boy*: "There's something pretty wonderful about a beach in the nighttime, with nobody around to make a lot of noises, and the gulls crying quiet, and the waves lapping soft and contented on the shore. I walked along looking for turtle tracks, and I got to thinking sort of like the Old Man. When God made water and mountains, I thought, He sure knew what he was doing."

Or how about this one: "As I remember the Old Man, he never said anything at all that you couldn't walk away from three ways and still find a fresh idea in it. I got to where I could listen to him with only one ear, separating the meat from the philosophy, and it wasn't until a lot of years later when I grew up to be a man that I found I remembered more philosophy than meat."

Or sitting by the fire after a long day spent pier-fishing, remembering not the fish but the characters on the pier: "And how the Old Man's face looked with the fire bright against it, making it cherry red on one side and shadowed black on the other, and how the wind sounded, thrashing on the stout gray shingles that kept us safe from storm. I haven't lit a fire from that day to this without seeing, and even smelling a little bit, the presence of beard and bourbon and tobacco and salt air and fish and fire that went to make up the Old Man."

He's writing a love story, plain and simple. You can hear it in every word, so true and clear, as if he's sitting beside you on the whittler's bench at the Southport harbor front telling softly about his true love. His love is the Old Man, the woods and fields and creeks, the restless watery wilderness of the Atlantic sea, timeless summers without deadlines or debts.

His true love is boyhood itself.

Philip Gerard, professor and Department chair of Creative Writing at UNC Wilmington, is the author of nine books of fiction and nonfiction.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FORT JOHNSON SOUTHPORT MUSEUM & VISITORS' CENTER'S ROBERT RUARK EXHIBIT

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ROBERT RUARK SOCIETY OF SOUTHPORT

Race to the Sea

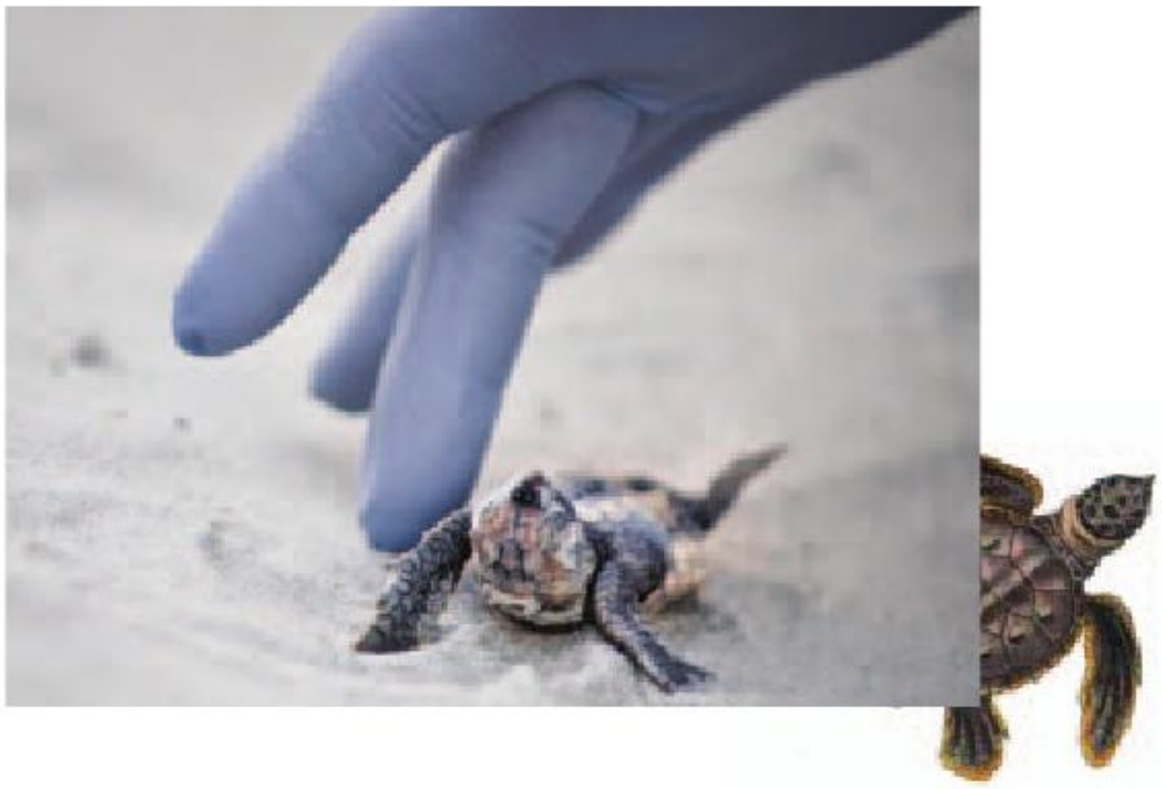
For thousands of loggerhead hatchlings, reaching the ocean is the first challenge in the struggle to survive

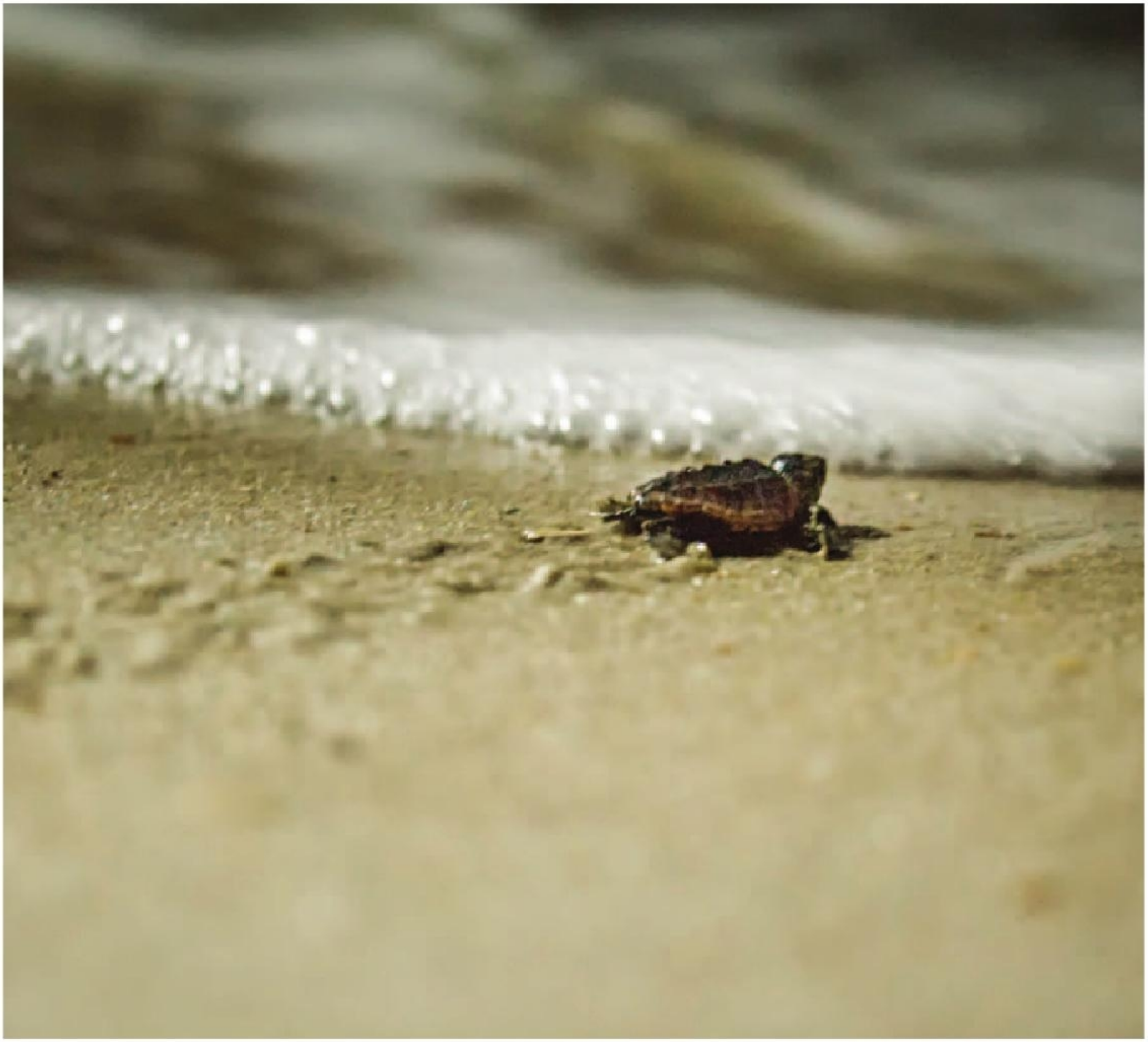
PHOTOGRAPH ESSAY BY NED LEARY

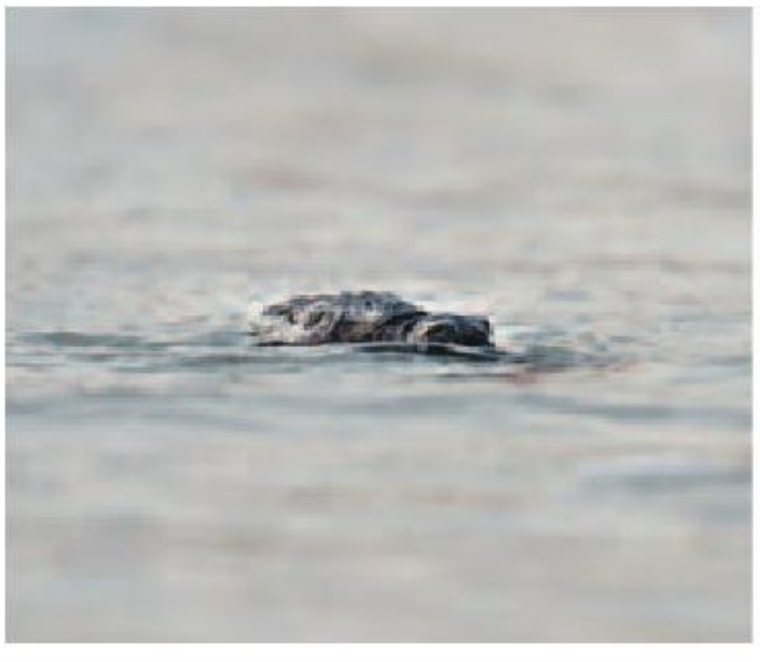
At dusk, a group of volunteers from the Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project gather by the shore, waiting for movement in a small patch of sand. Night after night, they have scrutinized a two-foot circle of sand with red pen lights, looking for any sign of activity, telltale signs of impending birth. I am also here with my Nikon camera, hoping to capture the actual hatch.

Finally, there is movement. The air is heavy with anticipation as the nest begins to cave in on itself. Then, all at once, tiny loggerhead sea turtles erupt from the white sand, tumbling all over each other in a mad dash to the ocean. They race to the water — more than one hundred of them — many tossed ashore over and over before they finally make it to the real start of their journey: life in the great wide sea. The odds are stacked heavily against these tender newbies. Only one in about ten thousand loggerhead hatchlings will reach maturity. Yet, remarkably, thirty-some years ago, the several-hundred-pound loggerhead who buried those eggs beneath the dunes made the same incredible journey.

Crawling in the surf in an attempt to capture the moment, I've scraped the skin from my knees, but in the face of such a hunger for life I scarcely take notice. As I watch these tiny creatures through my lens, I see a beautiful metaphor for all of life — namely that you cannot know what lies ahead, but you must go forward. In the case of the turtles, their lives depend on it.







The mission of the Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project is to facilitate and promote the protection and preservation of sea turtle populations and habitats by implementing conservation and protection measures through action, education and collaboration with the community. For more information about the Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project and to find out how you can help, visit turtles.wrightsville-beach.info.

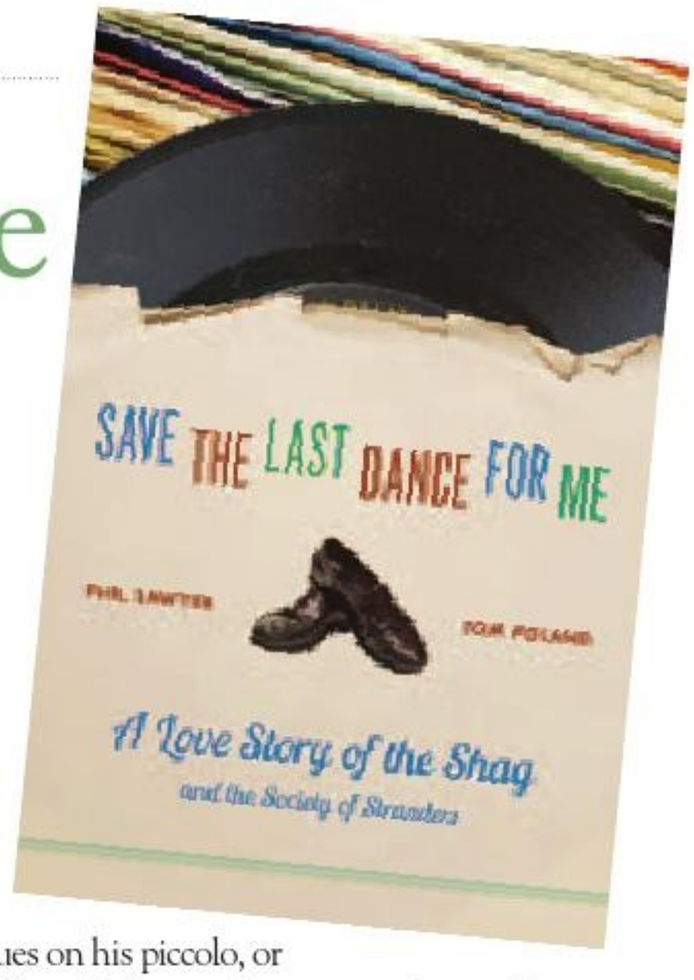
Visit www.seaturtlehospital.org to discover how the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in Topsail Island cares for sick and injured sea turtles found on our area beaches. Also, learn how you can "adopt a sea turtle" at the hospital to help it heal and return home.

*Please note that bright lights disorient hatchlings and can deter adult sea turtles from nesting successfully once they have emerged onto a beach at night. Sea turtles should not be disturbed, or exposed to flash photography or bright lights. Ned Leary used special equipment which enabled him to photograph the hatchlings without the use of flash.

Dancing Across the Color Line

How the birth of the shag brought the races together at Carolina Beach, and created the South's signature dance step

By Phil Sawyer and Tom Poland



I'm gone tell you the truth, I didn't call it anything. I couldn't stand it, how they all called it the jitterbug. All I said was, "Come on, let's go jump awhile." — *Chicken Hicks*

In *Shag, The Dance Legend*, Bo Bryan wrote, "During the war, the only people who heard a variety of rhythm and blues were a few hipsters here and there who made a habit of jumping the Jim Crow rope." One such fellow was Malcolm Ray "Chicken" Hicks. Dancing was in his blood, having learned to do the little apple from girls up in Durham, North Carolina, when he was around 13.

Hicks grew up around blacks, and it wasn't big a deal to watch blacks jitterbugging at a Durham armory. He slipped into many a "colored only" show. Watching from the balcony — Jim Crow's reverse sting — Hicks saw new steps. An innovator, he picked up dance moves wherever he saw them. Shag mythology holds that Hicks picked up his distinctive dance step, the "camel walk," lounging around Skinny's Shoeshine Parlor in Durham.

As Bryan tells it, Hicks became acquainted with some black men who took him to joints in a Durham township known as Haiti. There he came to love the blues, jazz and gospel. And when the big bands hit Durham, Hicks was in the balcony "watching for a chance to slip downstairs and boogie with the black girls," according to Bryan.

In "Who Is Chicken Hicks?," Ben Steelman of Wilmington's *StarNews* writes of Hicks' colorful past and his last exploits as a shagger: "Well known on the Eastern Seaboard from Virginia to Florida, Hicks regularly performed exhibitions at the Grand National dance championships in Atlanta; his last appearance there was on Memorial Day weekend 2004, just weeks before his death. He was admitted to the Shaggers Hall of Fame, and the Cape Fear Museum displays his signature white "shaggin' " shoes.

"Hicks served in the U.S. Coast Guard, then, by his own account washed up in Carolina Beach in 1943. Back then he said, 'It was like a state fair, twenty-four hours a day . . . There were places that had no doors, 'cause they were always open.'"

Hicks and his younger brother Bobby, along with their pals, would drive to the beautiful, historic coastline where pirates once roamed, lighthouses became legends, a colony vanished, and man learned to fly. And it would be a coastline where kids dared to discover wonderful music.

Back then you couldn't just flip a switch and find black music. Radio and the recording industry had yet to undergo the cultural revolution of the 1950s that would bring African-American music and performers to the forefront.

Brendan Greaves and Michael C. Taylor conducted extensive ground-level studies on the shag, and Hicks' penchant for finding black music plays a prominent role in their work. Greaves and Taylor's chapbook on the shag originated from their graduate fieldwork in folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Their work points out the difficulty in nailing down the shag's history, an often-heard refrain. They give Hicks an amount of credit for pioneering the shag similar to what Billy Jeffers received.

"Despite the fact that the myriad musical and social strands that ultimately coincided to give rise to the beach and shag music phenomena are hydra-headed, murky and ambiguous," Greaves and Taylor wrote, "the oft-told legend holds that beach music was born at Jim Hanna's Tijuana Inn at Carolina Beach, North Carolina, in the spring of 1948. It was here that Hanna, a former Merchant Marine, first placed African-American jump blues on his piccolo, or jukebox, at the behest of his friend Chicken Hicks, creating a space where white listeners and dancers could engage the largely taboo black music in a space easily entered and exited, both literally and figuratively."

In the June 13, 2006, online issue of YES! Weekly, Ogi Overman wrote that Hanna "called the amusement company in Wilmington that stocked the jukebox in his establishment and had them bring over some of that music they regularly took to the joints down the road.

"Soon the box that sat just to the right of the entrance to the long and narrow club was blaring tunes unheard of in postwar white America . . . Suddenly white America and black America had learned to coexist, if only at the jukebox at the Tijuana Inn."

Shag emissary Hicks and his memorable looks had made a memorable contribution to music. Bryan's *Shag* described Hicks as "tall and rail-thin with arms as long as railroad ties, skinny as toothpicks with sledgehammers attached at the business ends." At Carolina Beach, it didn't take long for Hicks' inclination to visit black clubs to take hold. Hicks and the boys would hit the dance scene in black "jump joints."

Greaves and Taylor: "According to legend, Hicks was a Durham-raised ruffian with an affinity for black music and white liquor. On his nigh weekly moonshine-purchasing trips from Carolina Beach to the neighboring African-American community of Seabreeze, Hicks regularly heard contemporary popular songs by black artists such as Joe Liggins and The Honeydrippers, Louis Jordan and His Tympani Five, Lionel Hampton, and Wynonie Harris, all progenitors of the nascent jump-blues style that was emerging out of the swing and big band traditions."

Hicks began to show off some of the new bop and jitterbug steps he'd picked up from Seabreeze. "I'm gone tell you the truth, I didn't call it anything," he said in 1996. "I couldn't stand it, how they all called it the jitterbug. All I said was, 'Come on, let's go jump awhile.'" His favorite white jump joint, he later recalled, was the Sugar Bowl, at the south end of Carolina Beach.

Hicks' propensity for visiting black nightclubs again paid dividends; he heard new music and learned new moves. When he hit the dance floor, people gathered around for the show. Hicks, however, was more than an exceptional dancer. He was an agent of change. He changed the music whites listened to. He helped bring blacks' "bop" sound to whites and that, in part, would lead to the rise of the "beach music" sound.

As Greaves and Taylor wrote, "After no small amount of prodding, he convinced Hanna to have the jukebox servicing company install some of this music on the Tijuana Inn's piccolo." The slang usage of "piccolo" for a jukebox is thought to have come from Harlem.

"I got chummy with the jukebox changers," Hicks said in a 1996 interview,

"and I'd say, 'Bring that record and that record.' I got rid of Glenn Miller in Carolina Beach jukeboxes."

The music proved infectious, and people adored its source: the jukebox. Coming out of the Great Depression, the jukebox secured a reverent place in Americana and shagdom. In a time when few people could afford their own phonographs, a nickel provided a way to hear great music. A designer's dream, the jukebox's colors, bubbles and swirls transported people to another world, and it gave black music exposure. It enriched the shaggers' musical tastes and heritage and spread the shag up and down the North and South Carolina coast.

As Ben Steelman points out, "By 1948, shagging had broken out at Carolina Beach's Ocean Plaza. The following year, however — after a spate of fistfights between local boys and servicemen (and a couple of rumored killings) — the mayor of Carolina Beach ordered a crackdown. The Tijuana Inn and Sugar Bowl were closed, along with a couple of other places . . . Hicks may have had to leave town for a while. (He never left for long.) The only dance hall left, the Ocean Plaza, limited dancers to ages 18 and older, so by 1950, the shag scene shifted down the coast to Myrtle Beach."

"The dance floor was always crowded with servicemen on those Saturday nights, and their tempers matched the hard-driving tempos of the music," remembers a man named Harry Driver, a frequent club visitor in those days. "The fights were so numerous that two policemen and two MPs were always around to keep the club from turning into a war zone. After spending some time in these jump joints, as they were called, you learned to duck, do some fancy footwork, and most importantly, how to spot the trouble-makers and totally avoid them."

The fights, according to Driver, were furious and fast. "When the fights started, they were quick, brutal and always bloody. The intent was not to win a short bout but to inflict permanent damage." Bottles, added Driver, were a favorite weapon.

Soon other jump joints opened along Carolina Beach. Shacks, they provided the basics: a dance floor, jukebox and black music. More and more young people could now dance to off-limit black music. The blues began to boil in places beyond the beach.

Katherine Cagle grew up in the mountains of Southwest Virginia, and she remembers how the music's true roots helped bring the races together.

"My white friends and I listened to rhythm and blues on WLAC radio, Nashville, and on Sunday nights we loved the black gospel music that sounded much like the rhythm and blues. We loved Chuck Berry and Fats Domino and Little Richard."

The white kids loved Little Richard, and no Jim Crow balcony could hold them. In "Antics In Candyland," Candice Dyer quoted Little Richard from *The Life and Times of Little Richard: The Quasar of Rock*, an authorized biography, by BBC's "Dr. Rock," Charles White. "We played places where they told us not to come back because the kids got so wild. They were tearing up the streets and throwing bottles and jumping off the theater balconies at shows. At that time, the white kids had to be up in the balcony — they were 'white spectators.' But then they'd leap over the balcony to get downstairs where the black kids were."

Black music was catching on as Greaves and Taylor described. "Following Hanna's loading of the Tijuana Inn's piccolo with African-American music, other entrepreneurs opened their own 'jump joints' up and down the Carolina Beach strand within weeks. These venues were bare-bones affairs, often consisting of a tin roof, a dance floor, and, most importantly, a jukebox that, for a nickel, would play the popular African-American music of the day. These jukeboxes were frequently chained to the floor to prevent patrons from stealing the money or, more significantly, the records. While Hanna's Tijuana Inn first provided drinking-age crowds access to black jump blues, these anonymous beach establishments provided underage kids a way to participate with the African-American music and dance that was at once taboo and coveted.

"The income from the newly thriving Tijuana Inn, in combination with his enterprising nature, provided Hanna with the resources to convert a former bowling alley across the street from the Tijuana Inn into a dance hall, which he christened Bop City. The new establishment served as ground zero for further Caucasian exploration of African-American artists such as Paul Williams and Sticks McGhee, white artists playing black music such as Jimmy Cavallo and The Houserockers, and the burgeoning dance movement called the shag."

But how did that burgeoning dance movement get its name? Theories abound, among them one served up by Johnie Davis, who lives in Carolina Beach. He's president of the Cape Fear Shag Club and a charter member of the O.D. Social Pavilion and Shag Club in Ocean Drive. As quoted in *Livin Out Loud* magazine (with permission from Nancy Hall Publications), Davis said his aunt, Gladys McAdams, was "the jitterbug queen of Carolina Beach" and she taught Chicken Hicks to dance.

Davis provides one possible origin of the term "shag."

"In the late 1930s and early 1940s during World War II, there was a little village just across the bridge from Carolina Beach called Seabreeze," said Davis. "This was a beach destination for African-Americans as they could not visit 'white only' beaches. In Seabreeze there were many juke joints, shacks and boarding houses and hotels that catered to blacks from all over. The dancing there was 'boogie-woogie' to very old rhythm and blues music like the Spaniels, Orioles and Ink Spots, among others.

"During that time," continued Davis, "GIs were returning home from tours in Europe and had heard the word 'shag' over there in an entirely different meaning. Some of those young white boys would slip through the woods at night and watch the dancing. Legend says that someone said, 'It looks like they are shagging.' Those boys would come back over the bridge and visit the joints in Carolina Beach and try to copy those dancers and add their own twist to it."

Davis said the dance continued to be called fast dancing for quite a while. "It wasn't called shagging because that was thought to be naughty," said Davis. For a while, people called the dance the "dirty shag." Nevertheless, locals began to copy or emulate the dancing they saw "and that's how shagging came about." Davis, while acknowledging the many stories about Ocean Drive, is certain the dance started at Carolina Beach in 1946.

He remembers the old haunts, the Tijuana Inn, the Rec Hall, the Ocean Plaza Hotel (The OP), a pavilion, and small places with just a jukebox, simple affairs as Greaves and Taylor describe. Wrightsville Beach, Davis added, had the Lumina Pavilion and other smaller places.

Earlier, inland, the dancing underwent change as well. The May 28, 2000, *Fayetteville Observer* said Shag Queen Clarice Reavis was dancing at White Lake's Goldston Beach in the 1930s where the White Lake Pavilion jutted over the water. She danced at U.S.O. clubs in Fayetteville too. "I was dancing myself to death," said Reavis. "We were doing the rock 'n' roll as hard as we could . . . And then we started to slow it down after a while."

So, where did the two races converge on the dance floor? The answer remains out of focus, a blend of black and white, gray for sure.

Little Richard aside, Bryan gets us close. He wrote in *Shag* that white kids would leave their beach houses in O.D. to go to Myrtle Beach. They were, without doubt, sneaking over to a black nightclub in Whispering Pines. They were, as Bryan wrote, "jumping the Jim Crow rope" to watch black jitterbugs at big band extravaganzas, some which reputedly featured Count Basie.

Save The Last Dance For Me, *published by the University of South Carolina Press in August, 2012, is excerpted by permission of authors Tom Poland and Phil Sawyer. Poland is the author of six books and writes weekly columns for various newspapers and journals throughout the South. Sawyer, a retired educator, serves as president emeritus of the Society of Stranders and was honored with their Lifetime Achievement award in 2011.*

The Italian Job

How a pair of enterprizing college professors – an artist and a perfect hostess – pulled off one of the finest Antebellum restorations in recent Wilmington history

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Not two blocks from Kenan Fountain, the Indiana limestone landmark at the intersection of Market Street and Fifth Avenue, sits a grand antebellum mansion where an artist-in-residence and an in-house chef feel right at home.

But it's been quite a journey.

For three years, college profs Kathy and J. Chris Wilson spent their weekends, winter breaks and summers sleeping in the formal dining room after grueling days and nights spent rewiring, re-plumbing and refurbishing every square inch of a 6,000-square-foot Italianate mansion. In the meantime and especially during the school year, home was an 18th century farmhouse in Edgecombe County.

Before a modern and stylish kitchen was added to the back of the house, the Wilsons made do sans stove or counter space.

"I could have made a cookbook for preservationists," says Kathy, who hand-chopped herbs from the kitchen garden for fresh pesto. A food processor would have blown the circuit.

And during the sweltering summer heat, oscillating electric fans provided more background noise than comfort. But worse of all were winter nights when the wind blew off the river.

This was supposed to be fun.

It wasn't, says daughter, Singleton, whose childhood portrait now hangs above the Grecian sofa — think Madame Récamier — in the front parlor.

"We used to watch *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* every week," she recalls.

Located at 120 South Fifth Avenue, this grand antebellum mansion was designed by Wilmington's premier 19th century architect, James F. Post.

Chris and Kathy love the opulent proportions of their double parlor, where daughter Singleton's childhood portrait hangs above the Grecian sofa.

Original cast iron mantels with églomisé inserts were restored to their former glory.

At age 12, she remembers wishing reality show host Ty Pennington and his construction crew "would just come and save us."

Ty Pennington never came, but, room by room, the Wilsons turned ruins into living space, including the impeccable restoration of a meandering central staircase that, owing to arson linked to the Wilmington race riot, burned to the studs in 1898.

Still, they try their best to deflect questions on their personal sacrifices.

"We're fortunate," says Kathy, whose playful hazel eyes are set off by a halo of silvery curls. "This is our dream home."

In 1990, the same year Kathy moved from Illinois and began teaching business courses at North Carolina Wesleyan College in Rocky Mount, she met Chris at a party hosted by the president of the college. Her colleagues had been trying to set them up for months.

"We met before they introduced us," Kathy recalls.

Chris, an art professor at Barton College, had been hired by Wesleyan College to paint a portrait of the president's wife. Like Kathy, he'd been married once before.

Their tale is the classic tale of opposites: "She was a Yankee," says Chris. He was the son of a wealthy third-generation lawyer, born and raised in rural Georgia. Kathy's dad, a true New Yorker, served in the military and was a financial executive for Mobil oil company.

But they shared a passion for preserving old things.

Little wonder they fell hard for each other — and this house.

Built by a German merchant named Jacob Wessel — most

Former White House chandelier and original heart pine flooring shine in the formal dining room, where Chris and Kathy slept throughout renovation process.

"Broken China" by J. Chris Wilson

likely to impress a young aristocratic woman back in Hamburg — the house, when completed in 1854, was a showstopper, even among the other stately mansions that had gone up in pre-Civil War Wilmington. The come-and-go stairway out front ascends to a Greek Revival porch supported by six Tower of the Winds columns; forty-two carved brackets on the eaves came from New York City. An observatory on the fourth floor complemented a modern ventilation system, and, among the innovations of convenience, a speaking tube allowed conversation between the floors.

James F. Post was the architect.

"Shortly thereafter he began to get larger commissions," says Chris, smoothing down his tidy grey mustache with his thumb and forefinger. "Post was the supervising architect of Thalian Hall. Then in 1859, he got the commission for Bellamy Mansion."

Although the exterior is considerably less imposing than that of the nearby Bellamy, enter through the elegant foyer and discover that the floor plans are remarkably similar. With its opulent proportions, the double parlor is an exquisite showcase of architectural grandeur: high ceilings with decorative cove molding, tall windows with pediment trim, cast iron mantels with églomisé inserts, and interior columns that create an Ionic screen between the front and rear parlors.

High ceilings and decorative cove molding aside, this house has fabulous flow, with the double parlor leading seamlessly into the added kitchen.

But they shared a passion for preserving old things. Little wonder they fell hard for each other — and this house.

An oil painting of the nearby Kenan Fountain and Bellamy Mansion by J. Chris Wilson displayed in the front parlor along with an eclectic mix of antiques.

The basement office, where Chris keeps various art books and a blanket chest filled with documents and research related to this house.

In the theater room: white couches and a kimono Chris bought while teaching in Japan.

Welcome to Tuscany.

On the main floor, formal and informal dining rooms, separated by original pocket doors, mirror the double parlor. Along the back of the house, an airy cook's kitchen, furnished with modern appliances (Sub-Zero refrigerator and Wolf range) and quartzite countertops, is big enough to house a soirée.

"At my Twelfth Night party this year, all twenty-five guests gravitated to the kitchen while I was trying to prepare a two-color soup," says Kathy. It turned out, of course, flawless, she says with an unmistakable New York accent. Don't let it fool you, though. She serves Southern tipsy cake with a shot of brandy in each slice.

"I think of myself as a Southerner."

Bedrooms are upstairs, as is the Jacuzzi tub and a sitting room/office where Kathy keeps the knife and sash that her father removed from Japanese soldiers during the Second World War.

Theater room, sauna room (original kitchen), and guest bedroom are downstairs. Art books line the white shelves in Chris' office, the home's original dining room, where the Wilsons keep a blanket chest filled with various clippings and documents related to the house and its architect.

An eclectic mix of antiques they've collected over the years — separately and together — furnish the house. Compliment a tea table, an heirloom corner cupboard or the serpentine front chest in the parlor

Chris spends most of his time in the oblong basement studio working on his "Murphy to Manteo" project.

"For many years I did paintings of how things look," says Chris. "Now I'm trying to communicate how a scene feels."

Upstairs: "My mom prized that piece of furniture," says Kathy of (daughter) Singleton's hope chest.

Enter and be wowed by the perfect restoration of a meandering central staircase. The original burned to the studs in 1898.

and Chris will tell you, with encyclopedic precision, where it was made, the year it was crafted, and where they found it.

See for yourself: There's a sugar cone in the 1810 North Carolina huntboard.

"That's just a placeholder," says Chris, gesturing to a Swedish marble top chest from the early 1800s. "That piece is gone the moment we find something American-made to fill the space."

Sentimental pieces, like the hope chest in the upstairs hallway, spark various stories, but the art on the white plaster walls tells all.

In the formal dining room, where a former White House chandelier hangs above the walnut table, the painted image of broken antique Spode china triggers memories of one of Kathy's annual Twelfth Night parties, an event that inspired Chris' "Broken China" series. As Chris stacked coffee cups and saucers on a serving tray, which he was doing a fine job of balancing on the edge of the wooden cupboard, a button on his jacket caught the edge of the tray, and a giant crash silenced the party. Guests watched in horror as Chris scrambled to collect the pieces, arranging them on an English cookie tin. Then came an epiphany.

"I can paint this."

Yes, the artist sees things differently.

The dome in the powder room? A would-have-been koi fish pond.

And the marble floor? Marble-top picnic table sans legs and base.

By the downstairs entryway: a scene from Edgecombe County. "This is our front yard at the farm house," says Chris of a cotton field that has inspired numerous paintings.

Last year, Chris Wilson retired as professor of art at Barton College. While Kathy still spends weeknights at the old farmhouse in Edgecombe County — just a short drive from North Carolina Wesleyan College, where she still loves her job teaching undergraduates — Chris spends most of his time in Wilmington, where he spends hours in his oblong basement studio. Works-in-progress suggest he is well on his way to completing his latest project, "Murphy to Manteo — An Artist's Scenic Journey", a series of one hundred large-scale oil paintings inspired by North Carolina landscape scenes along U.S. Highway 64.

It was only after the title suggested itself that Chris began to view it as a multi-tiered metaphor. Of course there's the physical journey. He and Kathy have spent many happy and inspiring hours riding up and down the old highway, journeying back into the area's rich and storied past. Chris is the spectator. Kathy is the navigator.

"I jot down down GPS coordinates."

And then there's the artistic journey.

"For many years I did paintings of how things look," says Chris. "Now I'm trying to

Kathy's custom-built kitchen is exactly what she'd hoped for: spacious.

communicate how a scene feels."

Hence the absolute hugeness of this project and the panoramic landscapes they include.

Chris' paintings hang in nearly every room as if the house were a private gallery, reminding the couple of their parallel journey through time and space. Journey through and visit the banks of the Roanoke River or a grassy meadow in Chatham County or a hilly stretch of highway in Asheboro or the breathtaking Whitewater Falls. Nearly thirty works from the series — some 16 feet wide — are currently on display in various state buildings, including the Museum of History, the State Library of North Carolina, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the House of Representatives Chamber in the North Carolina Legislative Building.

But no matter where Chris or his art goes, this house, filled with paintings, objects and memories of their joint expedition across North Carolina, is home.

"I get it now," says Singleton, home for summer break. "I couldn't see the vision when I was 12 years old, but this really is home."

The Wilsons lost two cherry trees when a storm ripped through their property in Edgecombe county. Don't they make lovely cabinets?

ALMANAC

August

By Noah Salt

The Pleasures of Deep Summer

A tart and refreshing toast, if you please, to the slow rituals and reveries of August, summer's traditional end, the month of going away and laying low. Deep summer, says poet Sam Keen, is when laziness finds true respectability, and our gardens begin to orient toward the autumn harvest. As summer's lease expires, the first apples and pears begin to ripen and drop off the limb, grapes ripen on the vine, suntans deepen, summer novels are finished, lilies and lavender reach peak bloom, and gimlets and mojitos taste even more divine on the porch.

In ancient Rome, this month was revered as a time of family rest and renewal, watched over by the goddess Pomona, one of the Numina guardian deities of home and garden whose job it was to look after a household's fruit trees and gardens as the days grew noticeably shorter.

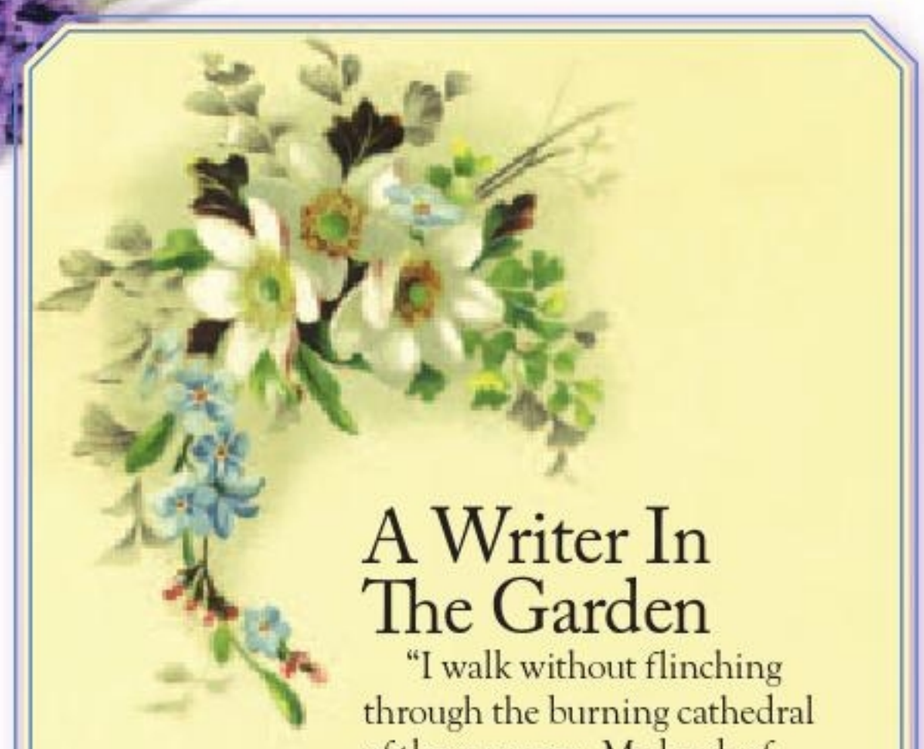
In a normal year, the heat and stillness of afternoon lies like a fevered hand on a withered brow, although this year's coolness and abundant rain has made an English summer of our Carolina gardens. Jove be thanked for the timeless song of the Brood II *magicicada*, the locust that filled lazy afternoons with its roasted-sounded mating call much of this summer. The brief courtship of the mysterious large-eyed bugs, which actually lasts only days, comes on a 17-year cycle, and this year's cicadas were the descendants of the same bunch Thomas Jefferson noted in his garden journal near the end of his days at Monticello. "I am an old man," he also famously took pains to observe, "but a new gardener."

The Almanac Gardener knows exactly what he means.

"What dreadful hot weather we have! It keeps me in a continual state of inelegance."
— Jane Austen

The Garden To-Do List

* Water in the cool of morning. Pay special attention to potted plants on hot days.
* Apply extra mulch to control weeds and cool soil.
* Raise lawn mowers by a full inch to provide extra protection to grass
* Train vines on support structures
* Share cut flowers from your garden with a neighbor
* Paint and stack wood for drying
* Thin fruit trees and enjoy the first fruits of the autumn harvest

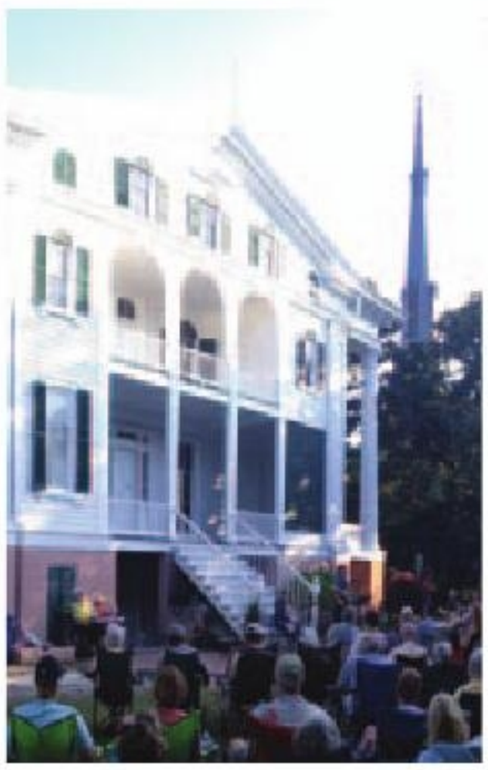


A Writer In The Garden

"I walk without flinching through the burning cathedral of the summer. My bank of wild grass is majestic and full of music. It is a fire that solitude presses against my lips.
— Violette Leduc, daughter of a French peasant and best-selling novelist

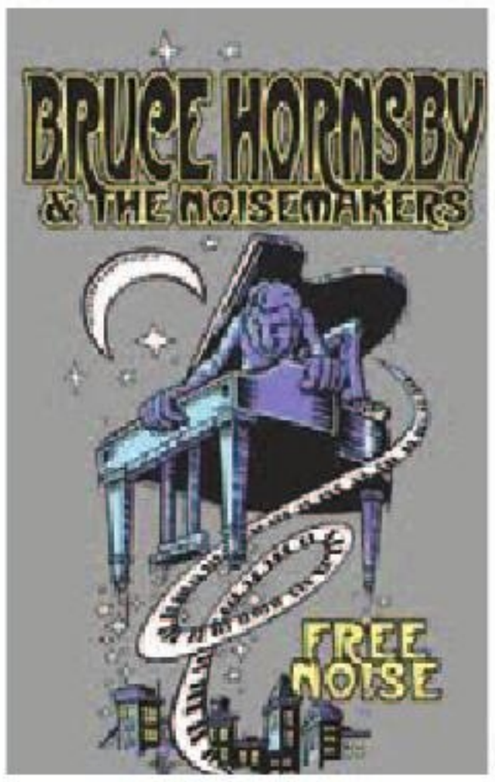
August 2013

Arts Calendar



Jazz at the Mansion

8/1

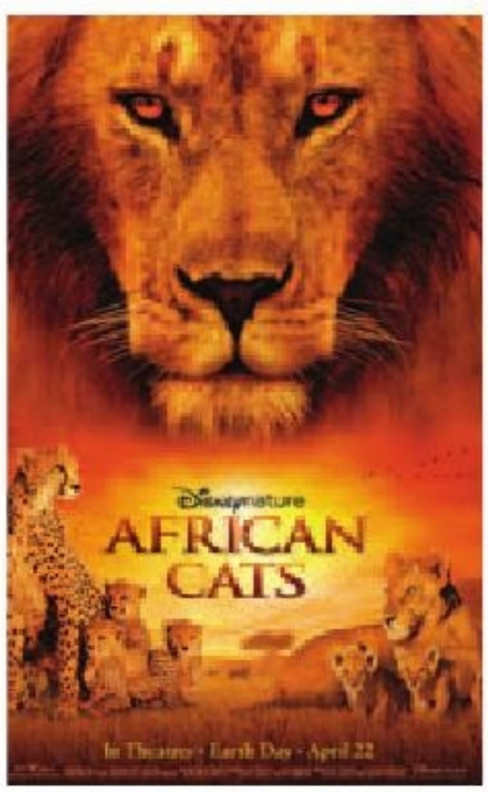


Concert

8/2

Before Midnight

8/5-7



Summer Movie

8/6-7

8/1 Literacy Council Luncheon
11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Includes plated lunch, silent auction, performance by students from CFLC's Group Readers program, and the opportunity to learn more about the Cape Fear Literacy Council. Sponsorship opportunities: (910) 251-0911. Pine Valley United Methodist Church, 3788 Shipyard Boulevard, Wilmington.

8/1 Shop Hop
5–9 p.m. Nine boutiques offer fashion-forward ladies exclusive deals and first dibs on new styles every first Thursday. Participating boutiques: Edge of Urge, Island Passage, Aqua Fedora, The Wonder Shop, aMuse, Lure, Return Passage, Glam, and Momentum Surf and Skate Shop. Downtown Wilmington.

8/1 Jazz at the Mansion
6:30 p.m. Bring blankets or chairs and relax on the lawn with live music by El Jaye Johnson with The Port City All-Stars. Beer and wine available for purchase. General admission: $12; Members: $10; Students: $5. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/1 Music in the Courtyard
7–8:15 p.m. Live music from local bluegrass/Americana band Whiskey Creek. Featuring Deb Ross on fiddle, Dave Storniolo on bodhrán (Irish drum), Rick Olsen on harmonica, Dargan Frierson on upright bass and guitar, and Philip Gerard on guitar, banjo and hammered dulcimer. Members: $5. Non-members: $10. Cameron Art Museum Courtyard, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

8/1–4 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Oklahoma!*, the classic musical that launched the legendary partnership between Rodgers and Hammerstein. Admission: $25. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

8/2 Kids Mystery Theatre
9 a.m. The Dock Street Kids from TheatreNOW are mixed up in one mysterious adventure after another. Help them use the library to solve their cases – like "Scooby Doo" performed live for ages 8 and older. Myrtle Grove Public Library, 5155 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6393 or www.nhclibrary.org.

8/2 Film Club for Kids
2–4 p.m. Children ages 8 and older learn how to act, film, edit and animate. Register online. Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6348 or www.nhclibrary.org.

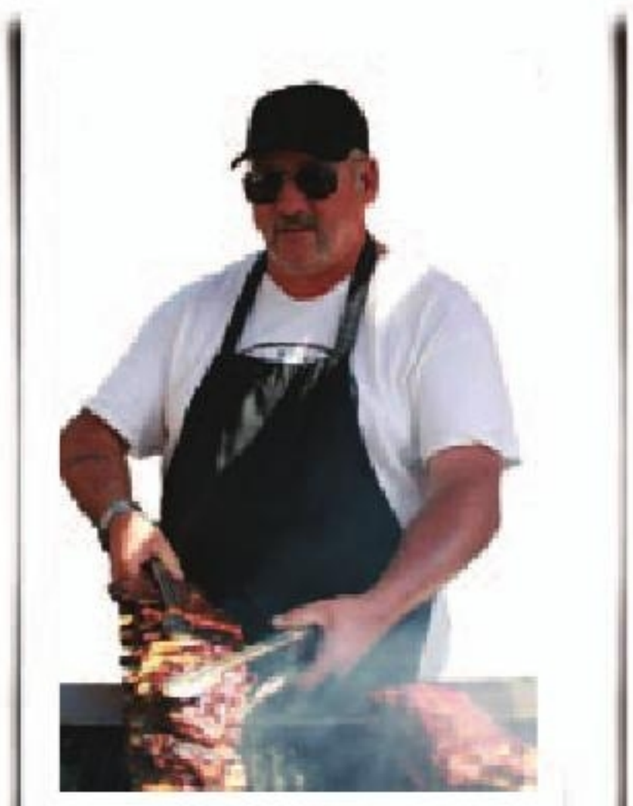
8/2 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from III Communication w/ Wrong Way, Beastie Boys and Sublime Tribute; Brent Stimmel opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: Open House Emergency Youth Shelter & Residential Services. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

8/2 Airlie Summer Concert
6 p.m. The 360 Degrees perform on the Oak Lawn at Airlie Gardens. Tickets: $8/adults; $2/children. General admission parking is offsite. Free parking and shuttles are provided from the Old Cinema 6 property at 5335 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700.

8/2 Concert at Greenfield Lake
7 p.m. Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers. Admission: $40–$47. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-0983 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/2–4 Beauty and the Beast
7: 30 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Brunswick Little Theatre presents the tale of the redemptive power of love based on the French fairy tale *La Belle et La Bete*. Admission: $6–$17. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

8/3 Good Vibrations Luau
2 p.m. Kayak over to Masonboro Island for a luau that features a Hawaiian feast pre-



RibFest

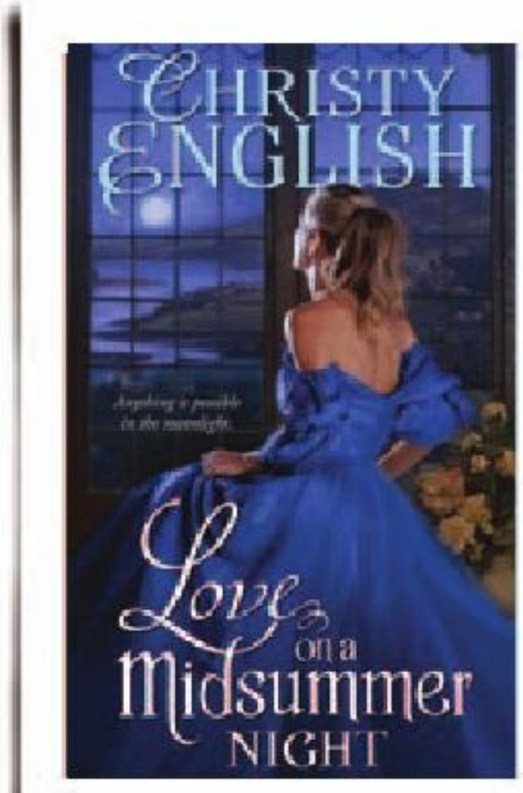
8/9-11

pared by chef Matthew Gould of Canape ILM, tropical beverages, craft brew, and hula dancers. Admission: $110–$125. North Carolina Eco Odysseys, 7432 Thais Trail, Wilmington. Info: (407) 247-5516 or www.ncecoodysseys.com.

8/3 Live Theater
7 p.m. *It Takes Two, Duets from the Great White Way*, is a benefit for Thalian Association Children's Theater. Original show created and directed by Mike Thompson with music direction by Michael Lauricella. Performance bridges gap between young performers and adult actors. Tickets: $18 (includes dessert reception before show). Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center. Info: (910) 341-7860 or www.thalian.org.

8/4 Free Day at Airlie
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free admission on the first Sunday of each month. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

8/4 Free Day at Cape Fear Museum
1–5 p.m. Free admission on the first Sunday of each month. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4362 or www.capefearmuseum.com.



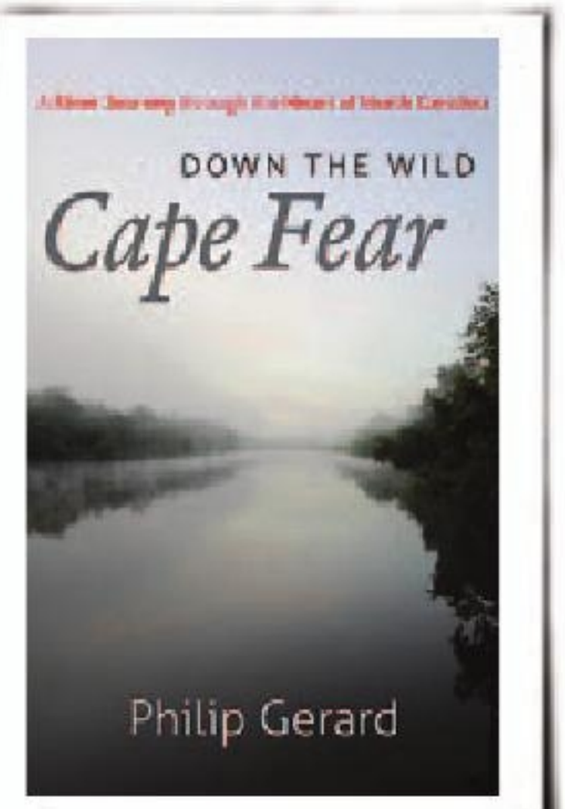
Book Launch

8/11

8/4 Art Exhibit Opening
6–8 p.m. Modeling the Masters features nine local artists who have chosen a Master Painter who inspires them to emulate their work. Spectrum Art & Jewelry, The Forum, 1125-H Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-2323 or www.spectrumartandjewelry.com.

8/5–7 Cinematique
7:30 p.m. *Before Midnight*. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.whqr.org; www.thalianhall.org.

8/5–9 Tweens Art Class
9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Drawing, painting, clay and outdoor fun. Members: $90. Nonmembers: $125. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.



Down the Wild Cape Fear

8/12

8/6–7 $1 Summer Movies
10 a.m. *African Cats* (G) and *Chimpanzee* (G). Doors open at 9:30 a.m. Regal Cinemas, Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-5131 or www.mayfairetown.com.

8/7 Summer Evening Nature Series
8 p.m. *Bats*. Discover why bats are such good neighbors. Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

8/7–9 Summer Green Road Show
An education and trade show for the green industry presented by the North Carolina Nursery and Landscape Association. Includes information booths, trade show vendors, tours, and networking opportunities. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 816-9119 or www.ncnla.com.

8/8–11 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday only) Big Dawg Productions presents *'night Mother*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Marsha Norman that delves into the final hour in the life of a young woman who has decided that life is no longer worth living. Admission: $23–$25. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org.

Landfall Art Show

8/29-31

8/9 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from On the Border, The Ultimate Eagles Tribute Band; Harmonic Content opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: New Hanover High School Band Boosters. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

8/9
Dancing with the Brunswick Stars
6 p.m. A showcase of dancing pairs in the best of Southern heritage and hospitality. Proceeds go toward scholarships for students. Admission: $100. Dinah Gore Fitness and Aquatic Center, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7473 or www.brunswickcc.edu.

8/9–10 Annual Mud Day
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Make mud pies, try a mud mask, or just play in the mud. Participants encouraged to wear bathing suit or old clothes; bring a towel and a change of clothes. Admission: $7–$8. Children's Museum of Wilmington, 116 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

8/9–11 Port City RibFest
11 a.m. – 11 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); Noon – 10 p.m. (Sunday) National barbecue and music festival. Admission: $7/general; $5/seniors. 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington, adjacent to USS *North Carolina* Battleship Memorial. Info: www.portcityribfest.com.

8/9–11 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Oklahoma!*, the classic musical that launched the legendary partnership between Rodgers and Hammerstein. Admission: $25. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

8/10 Battleship 101
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Volunteers stationed throughout the ship engage visitors in specific subjects and areas including: gunnery, radar, sickbay, galley, engineering, and daily shipboard life. Free with Battleship admission. Battleship *North Carolina*, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com

8/10 The Wailers in Concert
6 p.m. Legendary reggae artists live in concert. Admission: $23.50–$28.50. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-0983 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/11 Books to Movies Program
2–4 p.m. Free screening of a romantic comedy based on a novel by Wendelin Van Draanen. Adults only. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhclibrary.org.

8/11 Book Launch
6–8 p.m. Christy English's new book, *Love on a Midsummer Night*, is the second of three re-tellings of Shakespeare's popular play. Rumor has it that Wilmington actors will be on hand to perform. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

8/12 Prologue
7 p.m. Join Ben Steelman of *StarNews* and WHQR commentator Philip Gerard for light refreshments and a discussion of the author's new book, *Down the Wild Cape Fear*. The MC Erny Gallery at WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Suite 300, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

8/12–14 Cinematique
7:30 p.m. *Much Ado About Nothing*. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.whqr.org; www.thalianhall.org.

8/14 Dark Star Orchestra in Concert
5:30 p.m. Live music from Grateful Dead impersonators, Dark Star Orchestra. Admission: $25–$30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7855 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/14 Airlie Bird Hike
8–9:30 a.m. Airlie provides habitat for over 170 species of birds that vary seasonally throughout the year. Waterfowl, woodland birds and migrants are common. Hikes are free to members, or free with garden admission. Admission: $5/adults; $3/children (ages 6–12). Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

8/15 Community Farmers Market
5–8 p.m. Third Thursday Community Farmers Market includes local growers, producers and crafters. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7622.

8/15 Southern Cooking Lecture
6:30 p.m. "Southern Cooking, High and Low: A Short History of the Cuisine of the South," presented by historian, author and professor Dr. John Beck. Free and open to the public. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/16 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from The Waiting, A Tribute to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers; M 80s opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: New Hanover Track and Cross Country Boosters. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

8/16 Airlie Summer Concert
6 p.m. Grenoldo Frazier performs on the Oak Lawn at Airlie Gardens. Tickets: $8/adults; $2/children. General admission parking is offsite. Free parking and shuttles are provided from the Old Cinema 6 property at 5335 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700.

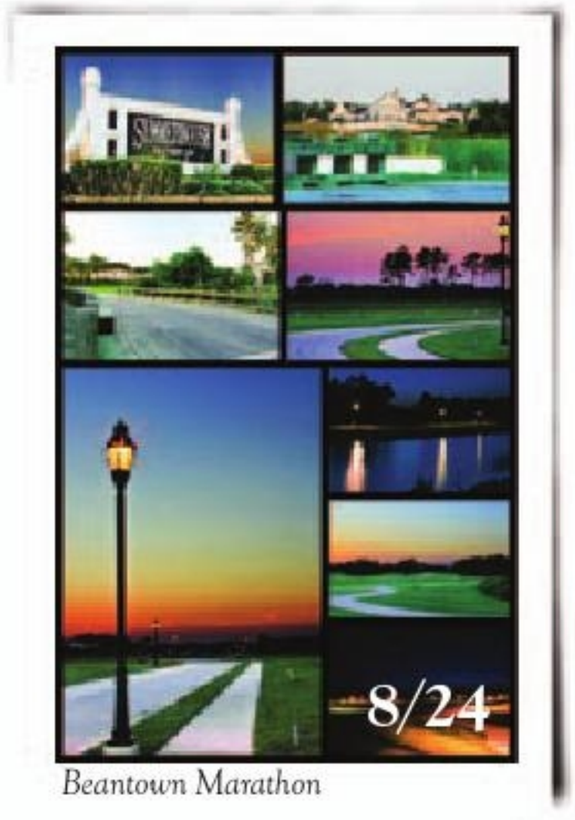
8/16 Gospel Violinist
6–8 p.m. Eric L. Taylor, gospel violinist. Admission: $30 (includes dinner). Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, 2929 Princess Place Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 675-8174.

8/16–18 Live Theater
8 p.m.– 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Oklahoma!*, the classic musical that launched the legendary partnership between Rodgers and Hammerstein. Admission: $25. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

8/18 Dance Showcase
2–4 p.m. The Dance Cooperative provides monthly informal showings to afford working artists a place to present works in progress to be reviewed and critiqued in a nurturing environment. Open to working choreographers, dancers and the general public. Donations appreciated. Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

8/22 Wilmington's Epicurean Evening
5:30 p.m. More than thirty local food and drink vendors judged by Dave Muller and Bobby Goodson, stars of *Swamp Loggers*. Proceeds benefit the Methodist Home for Children. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 471-6088.

8/23 Bird Hike
8–9:30 a.m. New Hanover County Environmental Educators teach participants about the many bird species that call Lower Cape Fear parks home. Wear comfortable walking shoes; meet in the parking lot by the playground. Free admission. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700.



Beantown Marathon

8/23 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from Draw the Line, The Endorsed Aerosmith Tribute Band; Dubtown Cosmonauts opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: Jo Ann Carter Harrelson Center. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

8/23 Fourth Friday Gallery Night
6–9 p.m. Join 15 local galleries and studios in an after-hours celebration of art and culture on the fourth Friday of each month. Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonfourthfridays.com.

8/23 – 24 Rummage Sale
7 a.m.–2 p.m. Find that one-of-a-kind item at the North Carolina Sorosis Rummage Sale, featuring a variety of household goods, decorative items, clothing, coffee and baked goods. North Carolina Sorosis Club House, 20 South Cardinal Drive, Wilmington. Info: ncsorosis.org.

8/24 Stride for the Stage
8 a.m. Thalian Association Children's Theater (TACT) presents the inaugural Stride for the Stage 5K race and 1-mile fun run. Refreshments, music, activities and awards provided. Proceeds benefit TACT. Registration: $15–$25. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 859-9501 or michelle@its-go-time.com..

8/24 Last Chance For Beantown
7:30 p.m. One of the last opportunities to qualify for the 2014 Boston Marathon. Registration: $50–80. Summerhouse on Everett Bay, Dolph Everett Road, Holly Ridge. Info: (910) 859-9501 or michelle@its-go-time.com.

8/25 Lumina Daze
4–10 p.m. Annual celebration benefitting the Wrightsville Beach Museum features food and drink, live and silent auctions, live music by the Wilmington Big Band, the Dixieland All-Stars, and beach music with The Imitations. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or www.blockade-runner.com.

8/26 The Carolina Jazz Connection
6:30 p.m. Rhodes Scholar Larry Reni Thomas uncovers why so many big names in jazz had connections and roots in Carolina. Free and open to the public.

Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/28–9/1 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Little Shop of Horrors*. This classic musical comedy is a spoof of 1950s science fiction films and tells the story of Seymour, a hapless man trying to escape his boring life working in a flower store. Admission: $27. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

8/29 Jazz at the Mansion
6:30 p.m. Bring blankets or chairs and relax on the lawn with live music by The Al Neese Project. Beer and wine available for purchase. General admission: $12; Members: $10; Students: $5. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/29 The Beach Boys in Concert
7:30 p.m. America's Band, live. Tickets: $69. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

8/29–31 Art Show & Sale at Landfall
10 a.m. – 8 p.m. One hundred artists display their various artworks. Free admission; open to the public. Dye Clubhouse, 1552 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.landfallfoundation.org.

8/30 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from Departure, Journey Tribute Band; Bubonik Funk opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: Cape Fear Literacy Council. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

8/30 Last Chance for White Pants
7 p.m. – Midnight. Gala fundraiser presented by Lower Cape Fear Hospice Foundation featuring live music by Motown, funk, soul and hip-hop band, Mo' Sol, heavy hors d'oeuvres, beer and wine, and silent and live auctions. Tickets: $100. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, Poolside Patio and Grand Ballroom. Info: (910) 796-7900 or www.hospiceandlifecarecenter.org.

8/31 5K for Healthier Babies
8 a.m. Family-friendly race includes 1-mile fun run; strollers welcome. Proceeds benefit March of Dimes Wilmington Chapter. Registration: $10–$35. TrySports Event Field, Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: michelle@its-go-time.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM
12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Thursday Yoga at CAM
12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Thursday T'ai Chi at CAM
5:30–6:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Thursday CAM Public Tours
7:30 p.m. Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

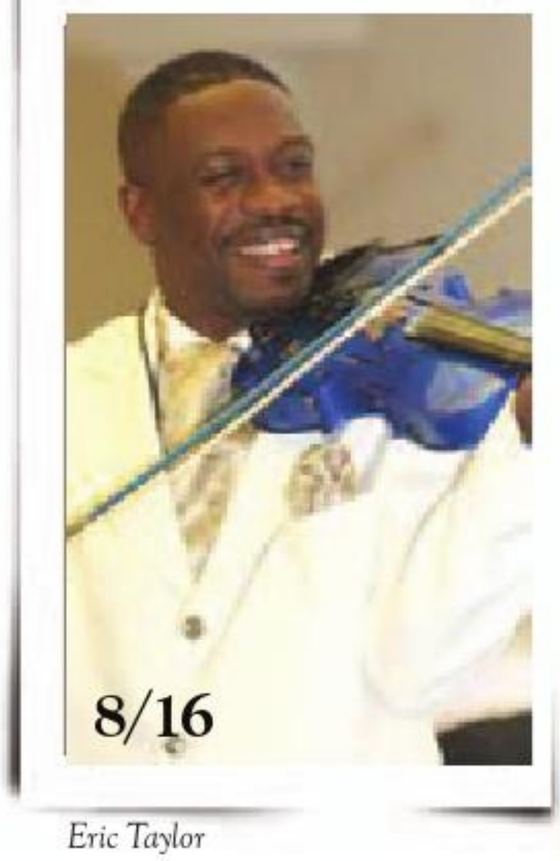
Airlie Summer Concert

Friday Birding Tours
9–10 a.m. Join the Audubon North Carolina naturalists on a free guided tour of this fascinating sanctuary where you can get close-up looks at nesting birds and chicks. Every Friday morning through September 13. Wrightsville Beach Public Access 43, North Lumina Avenue. Info: (910) 686-7527.

Friday Yoga at CAM
5:30–6:30 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Friday Murder on the Set
6:30 p.m. An interactive murder mystery dinner show written by Hank Toler. Tickets: $42; $30/children under age 12. TheatreNOW, 19 South 10th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday Riverfront Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artists and crafters. Riverfront Park, Historic Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonfarmers.com.



Eric Taylor

Saturday Yoga at CAM
10–11 a.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Saturday Historic Wilmington Walking Tour
10 a.m. Historic Wilmington Foundation offers two ongoing tours through October 12. The Streetcar Suburbs Tour will focus on Wilmington's first two suburbs, Carolina Place and Carolina Heights, and the development of these historic neighborhoods. The Forest Hills Tour will showcase the architectural and cultural history of the neighborhood. The Streetcar Suburbs Tour will meet at the Coastal Shopping Center at 17th and Market streets and the Forest Hills Tour will meet at the Forest Hills Elementary School at 602 Colonial Drive. See website for a list of selected Wednesday tours. Admission: $10. Info: (910) 762-2511 or www.historicwilmington.org.

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Salt Magazine

Practical Gods

The evening sun reflects off our blue birdbath, the memory
of afternoon rain, as the day's end is marked on an empty wall;
the leaky gutter still crying, inconsolable – like a mother who has just
found, or lost, her only child (a fact I only mention because, from our bed,
it always seems to be raining). There is no point to this: my wife does not want a
child; the weather does not reflect unknown desire. If she were home, I would undress
her in the cooling light, the tears from the willows glistening on her skin. But she is in
a different season, and I am here alone. What would happen next, I will not say. You
should know that the blue birdbath has the slightest of cracks and is always glazed with
rain – make what you want of it. There is only one robin that visits our yard – her
breast its own sunset. At dusk she hops from puddle to puddle – listening.

– Terry L. Kennedy

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

Terry L. Kennedy – author the chapbook Until the Clouds Shatter the Light That Plates Our Lives *– teaches at UNCG, where he is the associate director of the graduate program in creative writing and editor of the online journal* storySouth.

Port City People

O'Neil and Sweet Water Surf Fest
Friday- Sunday, July 12-14, 2013
Photographs by Jill McIllwain

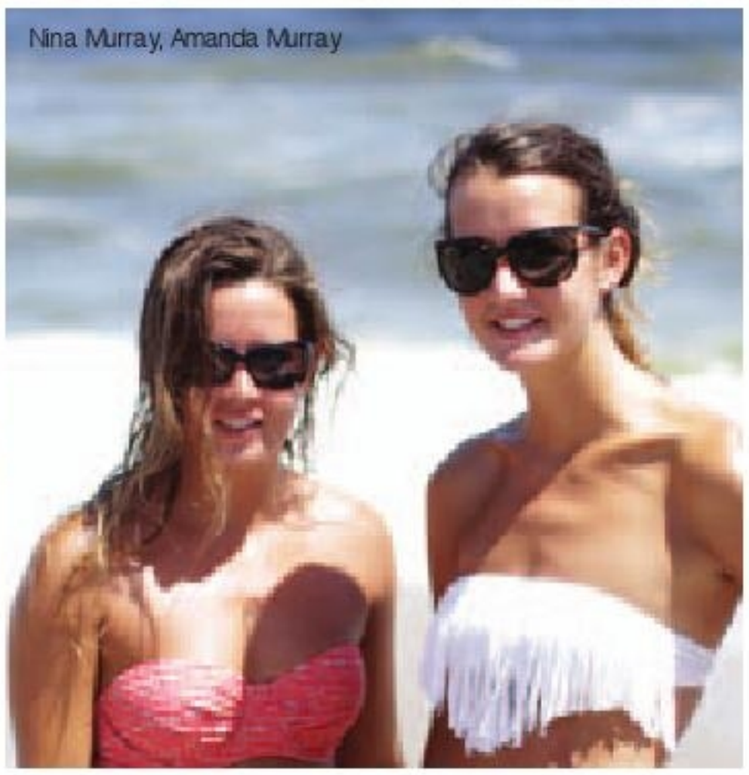
Cody Hammond, Adam Smith

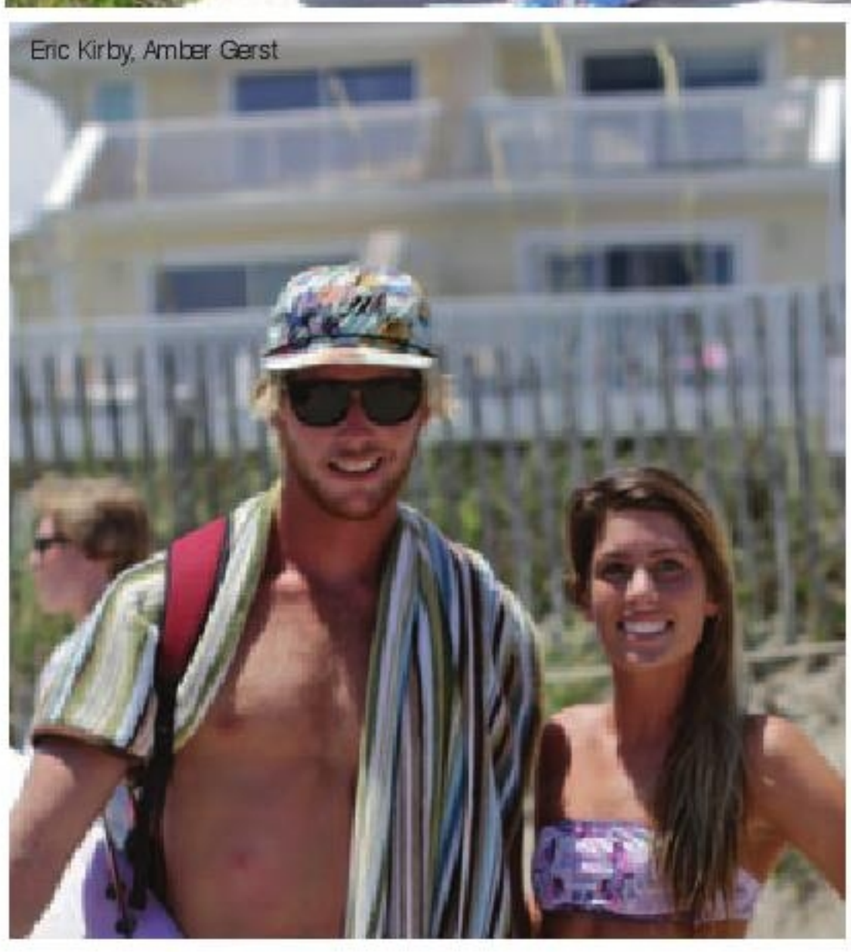
Bruce Willis, Jason Baysden, Stacy Baysden, Chuck Bourgeois

Joe Joe

Mac C. Ty Graham, Brad Wilson

LeeAnna Outlaw, Michelle Cox


Nina Murray, Amanda Murray

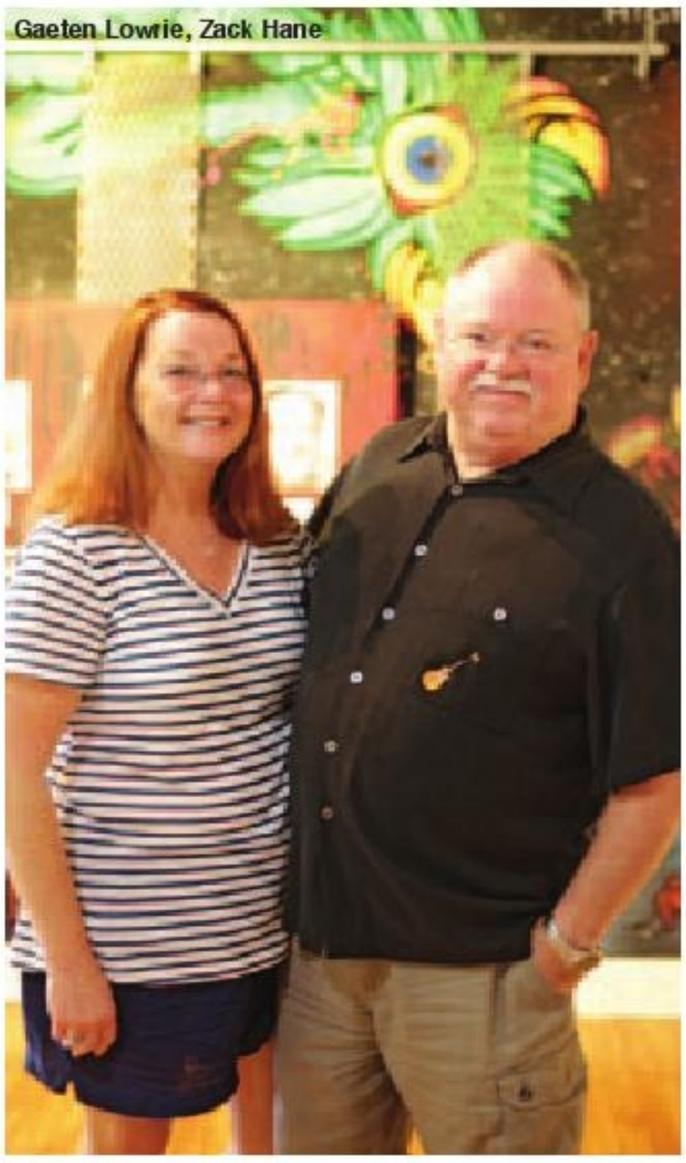

Eric Kirby, Amber Gerst

Ron Eriquez, Brian Green

Mabry Harrison, Ari Hofer

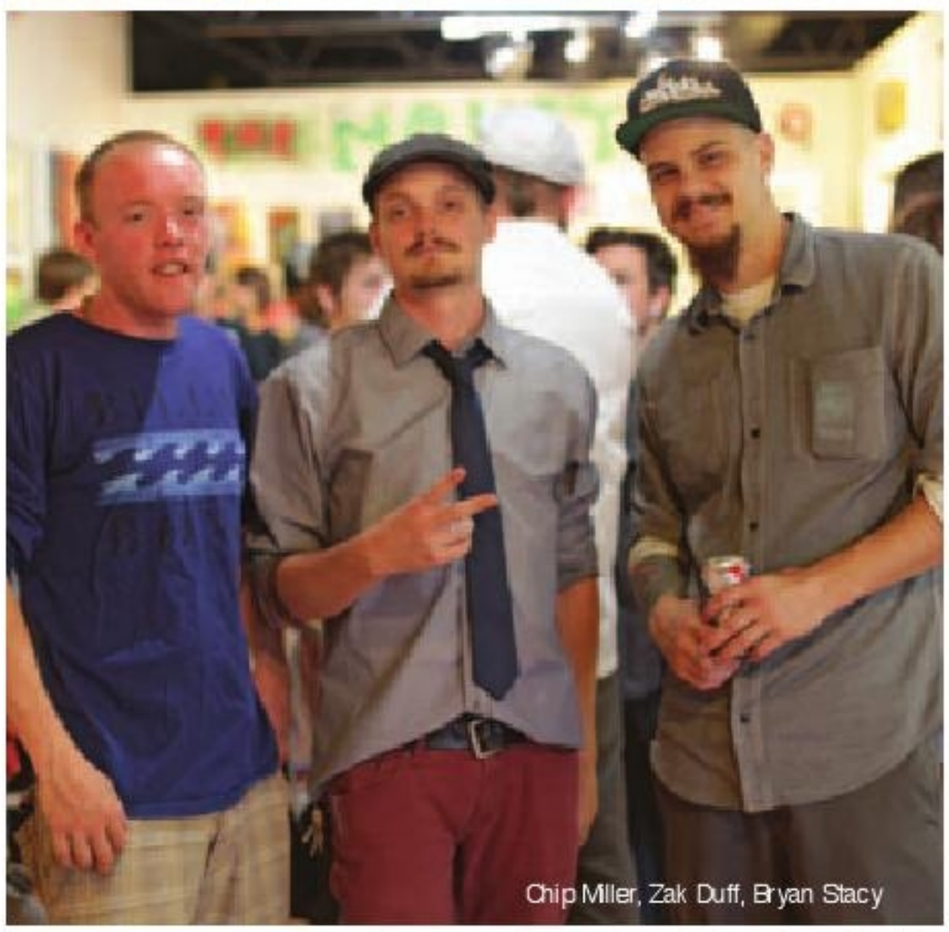
Port City People

"Monsters" Art Show
Saturday, June 29, 2013
Photographs by Jill McIllwain


Gaeten Lowrie, Zack Hane

Rob Fogle, Stephani Allen

Leanne and Scott


Chip Miller, Zak Duff, Bryan Stacy

Dorian Chance, Gussy Olesky

Randy Larson, Ronnie Thompson, Suzzee Toon

Joe Stauffer, Craig Thieman, Kenny Dodson

Annie Kyla Bennett Kim & Zak Duff

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Cool Sweats
Monkees
Gentlemen's Corner
Causeway Cafe
Cameron Art Museum
Carolina Farmin
Whole Foods
Food Lion Stores
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CVS Pharmacies
Port City Java Cafes
Brunswick Forrest
Waterford
Magnolia Greens
9 Restaurant
Artisan Design Company
Arts Council
Cape Fear Hospital
Cousins Deli
Fisherman's Wife

Flying Pi
Gallery of Oriental Rugs
Intracoastal Realty
Jesters Cafe
Kenan Auditorium
Landfall Realty
Laney Real Estate
Literary Council
Manifest
Muirfield Townes at Echo
Farms
NHRMC Auxiliary Room
NHRMC Old Cape Fear
Olympian Greek Restaurant
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Salt Office
Salt Works
Station One
Sweet and Savory
Thalian Association
UNCW offsite office
Visitors Bureau

Doggone Days

Leo (July 23–August 23)
I am Leo, hear me roar . . . right? Wrong. Goodbye Kitty. Put a sock on it. The biggest cats let the rest of the pride do the hunting — then just slide on in and enjoy the buffet. (Try playing "nice kitty," and say "much obliged!" before enjoying the kill, whydontcha?) Despite a mighty impressive roar, raging self-doubts start to leave after the trine early this month. Before August ends, big change comes with it. Your hunting grounds are about to expand, Killer.

Virgo (August 24–September 23)
Jumpy, ain't you? There's an itch you want to scratch soooo bad — and it has you all upside down. My charts say you can get away with a lot right now, Poison Ivy, with one little bitty exception. You look like you're lying even when you're not, so get a good mirror and practice. A smirk is not a smile, Sugar. Even when things are going so good this month you can hardly believe it your own bad self, just smile and say something charmin' — before anybody figures out what you're really up to.

Libra (September 24–October 23)
Everybody's going to start calling you Left Brain this month, cause that's how smart you're looking. Uh, huh. Then things get U.P.S.-delivery-man kinda sexy. With your astrological situation, let's just say you going to wind up hotter than the love child of Bill Gates and J.Lo. Put the lid back on the mayonnaise jar and practice loosening up your dance moves. It wouldn't kill you to write a thank-you note, either, saying, "Thank you, Miss Astrid."

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Before my forced breakup with Jose Cuervo, I was seeing more ghosts than the Long Island Medium. When Jupiter starts marching through your house, you start having your own kinda intuitions. Lightning flashes in the dark ain't always detached retinas. Sooo . . . work it, /Baby. Fast thinking and intuition can come in awful handy. There's one little secret you been hanging onto like it's the last pack of Ho Hos. You sure you wanna keep carrying that load around, Sugar?

Sagittarius (November 23–December 21)
Your supernova days are the 14–17; that's right. You gonna feel super-charged, too, and more than a little foxy, according to me and anybody else with a crystal ball. Waaay fine. But lay low and hang with your pals. You can eat grits, cheat at cards, lie about how many fish you caught — no problem. But whatever you do, do not mouth off at the boss. And if you don't want a mullet, don't mouth off to the hairdresser, either. You heard it straight from a (newly, usually sober) beautician/astrologer.

Capricorn (December 22–January 20)
You got a new Target charge card burning a hole in your pocket, with the stars exerting a mighty force in the House of Knock-Off Luxury Products. But you got some financial fixes to untangle before you go all Nate Berkus. Here's what Astrid says: Sweep the floors in your astrological house and wash some windows before you put one more geegaw on the shelf. You seen what happens to them hoarders, Honey? They got milk jugs piled sky-high and they start sleeping on them old Cabbage Patch dolls they got stacked everywhere.

Aquarius (January 21–February 19)
Lordamercy, if you want things to work in the love department, it's time to change gears. You got a handful of gimme and a mouthful of much-obliged, and nobody's impressed. Your sweetheart ain't buying it, either, cause you been talking faster than a Yankee with a speeding ticket. Switch to decaf, and hold onto your pantyhose, because things are going to move faster than greased lightning. One thing you got up your sleeve is going to work for you — just not this month.

Pisces (February 20–March 20)
Some people had rather climb on the roof to tell a lie than stand on the ground and tell the truth. You, my fishy, absolutely should not drink and dial — take it from ole Astrid — even if your sense of righteousness is screaming. Around the 10th, you might get it into your head to confront something else head on — fuggedaboutit. Two weeks later, you find yourself with a Moon Pie in each hand at the drive-through ordering milkshakes. That's as crazy as you ought to let yourself get, you hear?

Aries (March 21–April 20)
Sayin' an Aries oughta go with the unknown is like telling a billy goat to make a ruckus. He's gonna do it anyway. It gets him noticed. But what does it accomplish when he eats the sheets on the clothesline? You're like that billy goat — royalty in the Redneck Empire. You got a powerful effect, some strange kinda magic. If you can restrain your wild self for about ten minutes, though, you're liable to find out true love is right there in front of you, along with a lotta other things more appetizing than bed sheets.

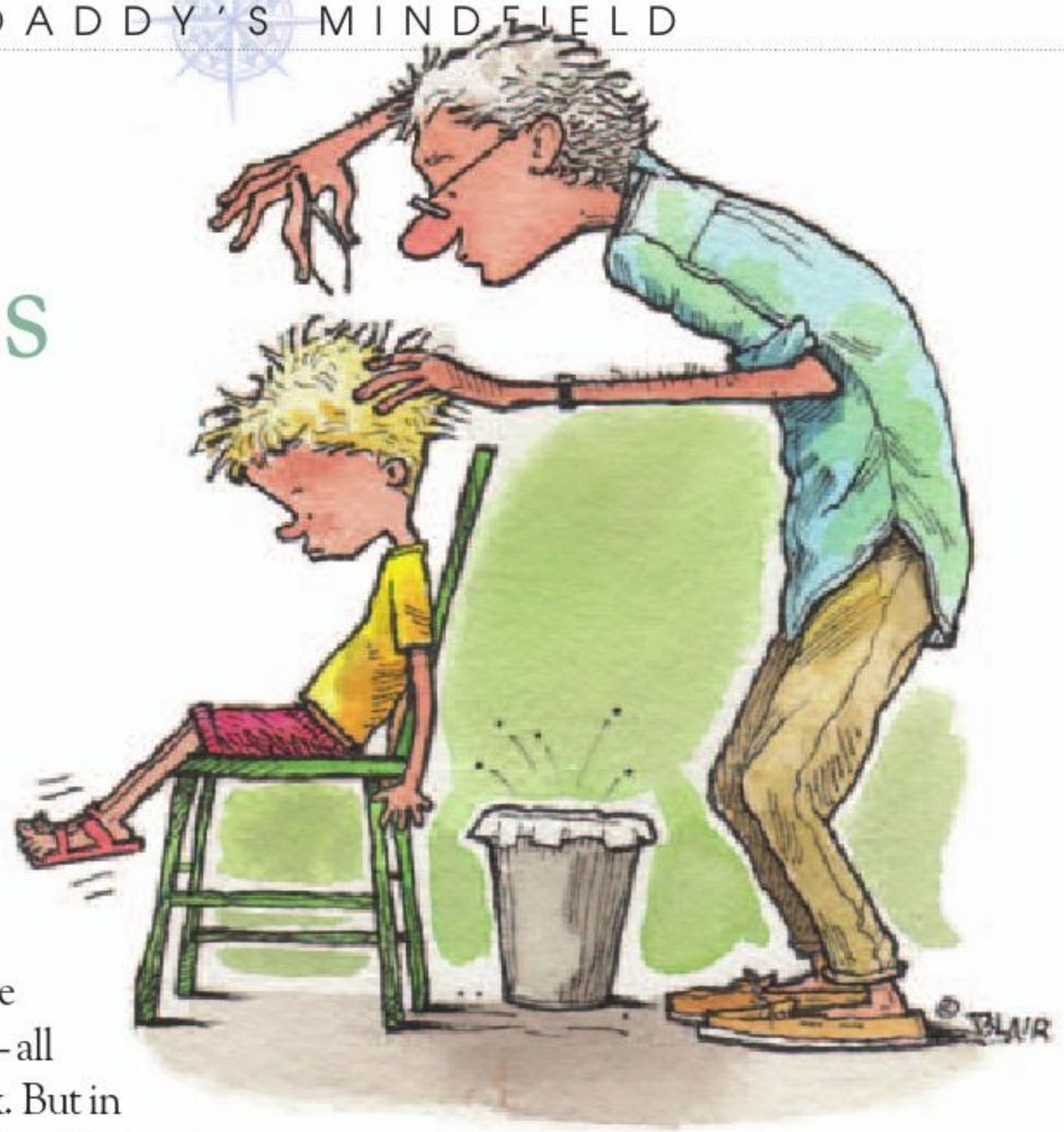
Taurus (April 21–May 21)
You're the bologna in somebody's cheese sandwich, Darlin'; you just don't know it yet. Sometime after the 4th, Venus slips into your house of love. Pay attention. You gotta sweet surprise coming on the 22nd, too, and opportunities are just about everywhere you look. Don't you get your panties in a wad cause you think it is too good to be true. Look with love, not fear. You're just skeered. F-E-A-R is just "false evidence appearing real," Toots.

Gemini (May 22–June 21)
Some temptations, a shocker-roo, and a complication are all on slate, you wild child. A full moon is going to rattle your world around the 20th. Sometimes you gotta let the card lie there, even when the fingers are itching and your mouth is saying, "Hit me." It is not exactly your style to play things straight or careful. You're a cagey one, with more moves than a Gypsy debutante. Spell R-E-S-T-R-A-I-N-T before you get bedazzled and shake your booty.

Cancer (June 22–July 23)
Making sense of this month is like trying to meditate at Chuck E. Cheese's. It's tough. Don't just do something. Sit there. Seriously, Crab Legs. The 14th is the one day you might trust your instincts — apart from that, find your place on the beach and sit tight in that beach chair, honey. The tide comes and goes. It's called ebbing. It ain't no tsunami.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Daddy Ditties



By Clyde Edgerton

In 1968, I came across a little book called *The Mason Williams Reading Matter* containing a poem called "Them Toad Suckers" and several other "them-poems" including "Them Tummy Gummers" and "Them Moose Goosers." Other written material and photos – all perfectly tuned to 1968 – graced this little book. But in "Them Toad Suckers" I'd found a poem to recite at the least provocation for the next forty-five years and counting.

How bout them toad suckers, ain't they clods,
Sittin' there sucking them green toady-frogs,
Sucking them hop toads, suckin' them chunkers,
Sucking them leapy-types, suckin' them plunkers.
Look at them toad suckers, ain't they snappy,
Sucking them bog-frogs, sure makes 'em happy.
Them hugger-mugger toad suckers, way down south,
Sticking them sucky-toads in they mouth.
How to be a toad sucker, no way to duck it –
Get yourself a toad, rare back and suck it.

The poem is just irreverent enough for my literary tastes. So when I decided to put the poem in my book *Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers* (as a kind of boiler plate model to use when writing them-poems with your children), I wrote Mason Williams and asked for permission. He said yes, go right ahead.

I never thought about writing a them-poem myself until about a week ago when I was thinking through a couple of the more down-and-dirty aspects of fatherhood, like dealing with head lice and changing diapers. Here are my contributions to the literature of them-poems:

THEM LICE-PICKERS
How bout them lice pickers, I declare
Picking them head lice from L. Ray's hair.
Pickin' them hopping lice, picking' them sleepers,
Pickin' them sneaky-types, pickin' them peekers.
Look at them teeny things, smaller than a freckle.
Pick 'em at the mall and you might get a heckle.
Them ricky-ticky lice pickers, sitting on the porch,
Bobby Toomey's daddy used a dern blow torch.
How do you do it? – can't catch 'em like a mouse.
Just get yourself some tweezers, pick a lousy louse.

THEM DIAPER CHANGERS
How bout them diaper changers, ain't they somethin',
Changing a diaper on a cute little punkin'.
Changing them heavy diapers, changing them light,
Changing them wet ones, better keep 'em tight.
Look at them diaper changers, most act happy,
But a great big load could make you feel crappy.
Them dog-tired diaper changers, looking to see,
If it be poop or if it be pee.
How to be a diaper changer, can't rearrange it.
If it smells funky, go ahead and change it.

If you're not a parent, you might think these poems are slightly off-color. But if you've been there, you probably don't, and you may even want to celebrate parenting with your own them-poem . . . say, "Them Veggie Haters" or "Them Kitty Pinchers."

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He teaches in the Creative Writing Department at UNCW.*

Illustration by Harry Blair.

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6 Sounds Point
$3,995,000

Figure Eight Island. Located at the end of a private cul-de-sac, this 4 bedroom, 4 1/2 bath sound front home has panoramic water views. Every amenity including dock, pier, 4 car garage, elevator, game room, 4th story sunroom and more!

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$2,950,000

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23 Backfin Point
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Figure Eight Island. Mid-century modern waterfront home with open floor plan has amazing wall of windows overlooking the sound, marsh and large pool. Very bright and sunny. Includes private dock and boatlift.

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